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The Popular Magazine

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Ducor, California, February 23, 1917.

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Right here I want to say that Bertrand Sinclair sure knows his business when he speaks of the Caribou Trail and other parts of B. C. He knows them all just as well as most people know the street car that takes them toward their home. How any one can object to paying twenty cents for the POPULAR, when such authors as Sinclair, Day, Coolidge, Chisholm, Connor, Roe, Witwer, and McNutt write for it, is past me. I think Witwer has got everybody beat when it comes to slang. His writings would almost make a corpse laugh. Chisholm's "Bad Bill" stories are fine, too. I didn't like Norton's submarine story nearly so well as his "Mediator." But then your magazine reminds me of the Orpheum Vaudeville Circuit. No matter how critical a patron may be, there is always something to please him. I consider the POPULAR by far the best magazine of its kind, because it never runs to extremes.

I have been hoping Day would start another story like the "Red Lane." That was some story! I could sit here and name hundreds of stories that were good in the POPULAR, I guess. What I want to say is: Here's one who doesn't care if the POPULAR was raised to fifty cents; I'd take it, anyhow. I figure there is a dollar and a half of reading in each issue. So you can see I am a fan for the most popular magazine on the market—no pun intended.

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Forrest V. Harding.

To the Editor,
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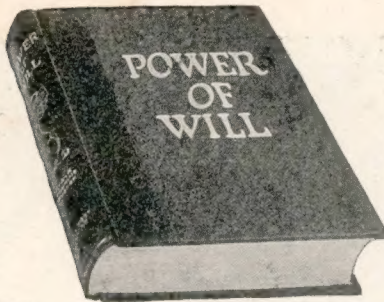
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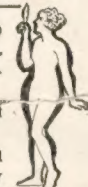
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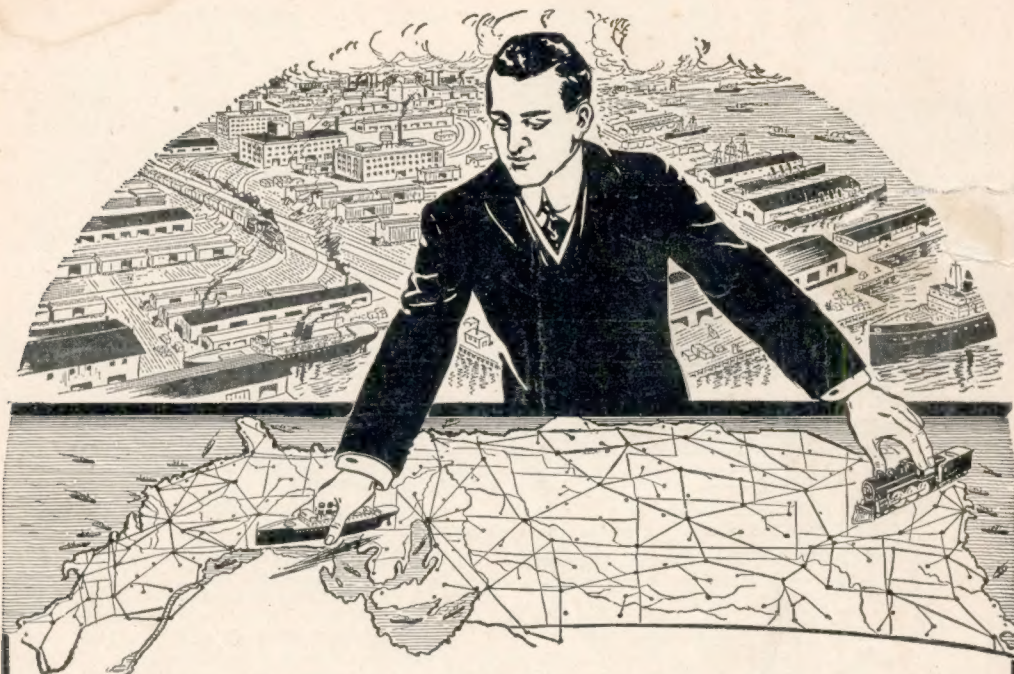
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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XLIV.

MAY 7, 1917.

No. 4.

Flat Gold

By James B. Hendryx

Author of "White Beaver," "Joe Belair's Debt," Etc.

They say that flat gold travels through sand. It is black and soft and heavy—flat, "like coins from the mint of hell." It is drifted and hammered and ground, and no man knows where it comes from. They say too that it saps men's brains; it is the price they must pay for its finding. Stories of a pocket of flat gold in the Yukon country start this adventurer on the trail to the Lillimuit—the worst tangle and jumble of peaks on the earth.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

A HINT AT "SOMETHING BIG."

DAN BURKE placed his bets deliberately, yet obviously without thought of system. They were small bets, as bets go in Sundown, and, more often than not, the young man's eyes watched the faces of his fellow players rather than the course of the little white ball. When he won he arranged the chips before him in little piles, and when he lost watched with apparent unconcern the rakes of the croupiers gather their harvest of rattling chips, and in either event displayed none of the fevered interest of the man who had to win, nor the stony-faced indifference of the confirmed gambler.

At the end of an hour he cashed in and sauntered to the bar, where he edged along to make room for a man who entered stamping the snow from his feet. The newcomer reached for a black bottle the bartender placed be-

fore him and paused in the act of filling his glass.

"Join me?" he asked. Burke nodded, and the bartender spun a glass toward him.

"How!" he said, raising the glass darkened with red liquor to half its depth. The two drank and returned the glasses to the bar. Burke recognized the man as a regular frequenter of Bill Weed's Bed Rock Saloon, which was the principal forgathering place of the men of Sundown. He was different from the other men. His hard-lined face was thin, almost ascetic. He smiled rarely, and when he did Burke noticed that the corners of his mouth drew downward. His eyes, of a peculiar greenish gray, were deep set and piercing—a hard face, yet attractive and cleanly shaven, a face distinctive among the bearded faces of Sundown. Burke shoved the bottle toward him.

"Have another?" he invited, as his fingers unconsciously sought his own stub-bearded jaw.

The thin lips smiled acquiescence: "Hell of a place to winter, isn't it? My name's Hibbing—Clay Hibbing."

"Mine's Dan Burke."

"Well, here's how, Burke!" Again the empty glasses were returned to the bar. "Got a claim on the creek?" Hibbing asked, when he had rasped the fire of the raw liquor from his throat.

Burke shook his head. "No. Came in too late. Just working for wages. Maybe I'll locate on a creek of my own in the spring."

"Been in the country long?"

"Not very. Hit the Yukon along in July and drifted up to Sundown just before the big snow."

"Who you with?"

"Pat O'Reily I'm Pat's crew."

"Pat O'Reily, eh! Let's see, he's Nine above Discovery. Ought to have a pretty good thing. How's the test panning?"

"Not so bad," answered Burke evasively. "What's your claim?"

"I've got a dozen. Buy 'em and sell 'em, and take a chance. I'm not much on the pick and shovel myself, and as for chopping cordwood and cranking a windlass—" The man shrugged expressively.

"Broker?" asked Burke.

"Yes, and speculator. All I want out of a claim is a profit on my money. When some fellow is ready to quit, I buy cheap. Then maybe I run his shaft down a few feet, or sink a couple of new ones and sell out on the test panning. Sometimes it don't show—and again I clean up pretty well. I sold Sorenson his Number 18 claim for eight thousand. It cost me five hundred. And Sorenson cleaned up twenty-seven thousand before the freeze-up! It's a gamble. What I need is more capital. If I had an extra ten or fifteen thousand right now, I know where I could clean up big." As Hibbing talked his green-gray eyes gazed past Burke toward the whining wheel and the rattling chips, but the sudden spark of interest that lighted the eyes of the younger man was not lost upon him. A few moments later, he drew the parka hood

over his head, and with a nod to Burke passed out into the night.

For a long time the younger man stood, thinking, while the bartender removed the bottle, plunged the two empty glasses into a convenient tub, and wiped professionally at the surface of the pine bar. Men came and went, and through the low log room sounded the drone of conversation and the unceasing rattle of chips. With his back to the bar, Burke placed his elbows upon it and surveyed the scene with interest. The camp of Sundown had sprung up in a day when word of Tolif Larson's rich strike reached the Yukon. Burke had mushed the two hundred miles from the river only to find the entire creek valley staked, and, because wages were high, he had stayed. Shortly thereafter the big snow came, and Sundown, sufficient unto itself, faced the long winter. Although a chechahco, Burke had learned to love the gold country—the land of, rough comradery, where the millionaire and the wage earner rubbed elbows at the same bar, and men were accepted at their worth. He loved the short days spent chopping cordwood to feed the fires that thawed out O'Reily's gravel, cranking the windlass, and filling the bucket at the bottom of the short shaft. And he loved the long evenings when he read from the meager assortment of man-thumbed magazines that comprised O'Reily's library, or loafed to the Bed Rock, where he bucked the wheel in a modest way and listened to the gossip of the camp. Dan Burke was a happy-go-lucky soul who had drifted into the White Country as much in search of adventure as of gold. And in the stampede camp of Sundown, he had penetrated to the very heart of the gold country. The feel of gold was in the air—not the gold of the dredge companies and the stamp mills and the cyanide plants, but poor man's gold.

In Sundown men dreamed and thought and talked of gold, and with raw gold paid for their drinks and bet it on the turn of a card. Those who had found gold spent it royally, and those who had not lived in high hope—

who knows? To-morrow—next spring—the lucky stroke of a pick, and then—and then they would repeat the story of Larson, of how in gouging for a beaver he happened to notice some dull yellow grains and of how he panned two hundred dollars out of the sides of the wash between supper and sundown. Whereupon, he hastened to file "Discovery," and when other men came and the camp sprang up about him, he named it Sundown after the moment of his triumph.

As Burke stood with his back against Bill Weed's bar he speculated upon the words of Hibbing. "Wonder what kind of a deal he's got on his chest?" he muttered. "With ten or fifteen thousand more he said he could clean up big. Wonder what kind of a hombre he is?" He glanced about the room, minded to question some one concerning Hibbing, but recollecting that Sundown and its adjacent half continent frown upon personal inquiry held his peace. "I've got a good notion to let him handle the rest of Aunt Millie's wad—save enough to outfit for a prospecting trip in the spring, and take a chance. I'm working like a wop now, but by spring I'll be a sure-enough prospector."

Swiftly the young man's thoughts traveled over the events of the past few years, which had been years of varied experience. He had successfully, but hardly successfully, filled a dozen different positions—all within the space of three short years immediately following the termination of an interrupted college career. While in no sense an egotist, and despite his many failures, Burke at twenty-four possessed unbounded confidence in his own ability. The fact that he had consistently failed to make good troubled him not at all. For he knew that never had he really tried to make good—never had the game seemed worth the candle—never had his heart been in his work. When the death of an aunt left him in possession of twenty thousand dollars he took a fling at Broadway. Four thousand lasted a week. Then he sobered up, wondered where the fun

came in, and because Skagway happened to be the farthestmost point he could think of he purchased a ticket for Skagway, packed his suit case, and journeyed thither.

The day following his arrival in the Alaskan coast town he traded his suit case for a "war bag" and went inside. There, on a tributary of the Yukon, he bit into the raw—liked it, and bit again. It was good. Here was a man's game—a game worth while! He learned to work with his two hands and to live by the product of their labor. He rubbed shoulders with tillicums and thawed meat with men who scorned to spend any but virgin gold. He threw his safety razor into the river, learned to eat grease-sopped pilot bread and listen for word of a strike. Then came the Sundown stampede, and Burke watched the sour doughs pass him on the trail, gritted his teeth, and pushed on to arrive in Sundown after the whole creek had been staked, whereby men knew he was no piker.

Thus when Hibbing mentioned that something big might be turned by the investment of ten or fifteen thousand dollars, Burke's interest was aroused, and later, as he tramped along the hillside toward Pat O'Reily's shack, he made up his mind to question the man further.

CHAPTER II.

BURKE ACCEPTS AN INVITATION.

Several days passed during which Burke saw nothing of Clay Hibbing. Then, one night as he cashed in his chips and relinquished his seat at the roulette table to another, he looked up to find the green-gray eyes regarding him intently. Evidently the man had been watching his play. Burke smiled, nodded, and jerked his head toward the bar.

As Hibbing watched the beads rise to the surface of the red liquor in his glass he spoke: "You can't beat the wheel, even if she's square. The odds ain't right. No other house game, either."

Burke grinned. "I know," he answered. "I don't expect to beat it. I

just take a shot at it once in a while for the fun of the thing. I don't expect to break the bank with two-bit chips, and for the same reason it can't nick me deep enough to hurt."

Hibbing nodded. "Unless your day's wages are all you've got. A man can slide a day's wages across before he knows it with two-bit chips."

The glasses were emptied and refilled in silence, and Burke felt a swift resentment against the man whose veiled hint was nearer a direct question than Sundown's ethics permitted. The other read his thoughts, and the thin lips smiled as the green-gray eyes gazed full into his.

"Look here, Burke!" Hibbing said frankly. "What's the use of 'beating the devil around the stump,' as the saying goes? You're no pick-and-shovel hand, even if you are working for O'Reily. The point is this: I've been thinking about you since the other night. I know you're the only other man in Sundown that has ever smoked on a campus. And I got to figuring why you're shoveling gravel for Pat O'Reily. It's one of two things, I concluded: He's broke, or he's learning the game where she starts. Unless——" Hibbing paused and regarded the other quizzically. "Unless he's a gam. I'd noticed you at the wheel several times, but I never paid any attention to your play, so to-night I slipped over to get a line on you. I watched you for an hour or more."

Burke, whose resentment at Hibbing's seeming impertinence had cooled, laughed. "What did you find out?" he asked.

"You're no gambler," answered the man in a tone of conviction; "you're not trying out a system; you don't plunge on hunches, and three or four times you hedged your own bets without noticing it."

"So I'm either broke or learning the game?" queried Burke.

"That's it," assented the other. "And I'll bet a stack of blues you're not broke. Even with your piffing two-bit bets, you stood to lose more than a man could afford who had nothing but

his wages. Not that he mightn't have played 'em as hard as you did, but you took the game too easy. You see, I had already figured you're not a gambler, and only a gambler could have held an even face if he was getting nicked till it hurt." Hibbing forbore to mention that the real reason for his deduction was the unconscious gleam of interest that had leaped into Burke's eyes at the time of their first meeting, when he had casually mentioned that with ten or fifteen thousand additional capital he could swing something big.

Burke accepted the other's estimate with a smile. "You win," he said. "And to save you the trouble of figuring the exact size of my roll I don't mind telling you it amounts to just fifteen thousand and some odd dollars. Let's get down to cases." He was still smiling. "In order to conclude our business so we can talk about something else, suppose you offer me a claim that is dirt cheap at fifteen thousand—that's near enough the exact figure. Then I'll decline the offer, the business will be concluded, and we'll be as good friends as ever."

Hibbing laughed. "Somebody been trying to sell you a claim?"

"Nope, you're the first—but come, do I hear an offer?"

Hibbing ordered cigars. "I wasn't thinking of selling you a claim," he answered, "but of letting you in on my end of it. I've got a proposition that looks like the best thing I've ever tackled, but I can't swing it within about fourteen thousand." The man stopped abruptly and consulted a heavy gold watch. "Nine-thirty—I've got to hit for the shack!" he exclaimed. "Kit ain't keen on being left alone at night. See you again."

The man had proceeded but a few steps when he hesitated, turned, and retraced his steps. "By the way, Burke, can't you come up some evening? It's the last cabin up the big draw that breaks to the east. It'll do Kit good to see some one that's—our kind of folks. Kit's my wife. Do you play cribbage?"

Burke nodded eagerly. "Haven't had a game of crib in a long time. I'll sure come. How about to-morrow evening?"

"Just the thing! Come early and stay late. We'll be expecting you."

For some time after Hibbing's departure, Burke stood toying idly with his empty glass. From the rear of the long room sounded the low pur of the wheel and the noisy rattle of chips. A group of roisterers near the end of the bar were throwing dice for drinks, and their bull-throated laughter boomed loudly upon the tobacco-laden air.

Two men entered, and as they stamped the snow from their feet the larger jerked a hand from the huge mitten that dangled at his sleeve and pinched the icicles from his mustache.

Burke recognized him as Sorenson, the big, simple Swede who had struck it rich on the claim he had bought from Hibbing. His companion was "Grubstake" Reirdon, a hanger-on of the camp, who, having no claim of his own, and an inherent disinclination to work for other men, spent his days trying to persuade some one to grubstake him for a prospecting trip that was to accomplish the everlasting fortunes of both. Evidently the conversation had begun elsewhere, and as evidently Sorenson was unimpressed. "Naw, Aye t'ank Aye bane got gude t'ing har ba Sundown. Aye t'ank Aye buy ju drink, but Aye ain'd gon fule mit naw more claim."

"But listen, Sorenson, it's *flat gold*, I'm tellin' ye. The kind that lays in pockets. Ol' man Chawtheair, he's rotten with it! But he ain't filed no claim. If I c'd trail him to his diggin's an' then beat him to the recordin' office, it 'u'd be ourn. An' if I couldn't work that, there's the gal. They's ways o' makin' wimin talk. Yer a fool to pass this up."

But Sorenson remained obdurate, although Reirdon continued to argue, while Burke wondered vaguely what he meant by "*flat gold*."

After leaving Burke, Hibbing proceeded directly to his cabin on the outskirts of the camp. As he entered a

woman looked up from her book, frowned at the inrush of cold air, and returned her eyes to the page.

"He's a live one, all right," remarked the man, as he removed his heavy fur parka, "but he's got to be handled right."

The woman closed her book and suppressed a yawn. "Who's a live one?" she asked, with an air of indifference.

"Why, Burke, of course! The fellow I was telling you about—the chechahco that's working for O'Reily. He's got the kale, and it's up to us to pry it loose."

"What's the scheme? Are you going to sell him a claim?"

Hibbing shook his head. "He won't stand for that. It's this way: I'm a plain broker, and I've got a proposition that's a little too heavy for me to swing. It will take fourteen thousand more to put it through, see!"

"Yes, I see, and, like all the rest of them, this is going to be the last crooked move we'll make, isn't it?" The words fell in a dead level tone, and Hibbing shifted uneasily.

"He'll be here to-morrow night—coming up to play crib. He's no rough-neck—not much more than a kid. He ought to be easy if we handle him right. We'll switch the conversation onto mines; nothing else to talk about in this God-forsaken hole. After that you leave him to me. Keep your wits about you and back me up with some side stuff now and then."

"And what if I won't do it? What if I refuse to help you in any more of your dirty schemes? The first time, back in Nome, you told me the men we 'trimmed,' as you call it, had swindled you, and that you were only getting back the money that rightfully belonged to you. And I believed you. And then—I found out! You will never know what I suffered when I learned that the man I married was a professional crook. I really loved you then—when I gave up my school back there and married you. I thought of leaving you, but I never could bring myself to the point of doing it. And in those days I had visions of reforming you."

The woman laughed bitterly. "Yes, I was fool enough to think I could make a real man out of one who would rather swindle somebody out of a thousand dollars than make two thousand honestly. So I stayed, and before I knew it, it was too late. I was a swindler, too."

Hibbing regarded her with a sneer. "Well, what's the idea of all the sob stuff? We've gathered the kale, haven't we?"

"Yes, and what have I got to show for it?" The man noted that the blue eyes flashed dangerously and that a shrill note of anger had crept into her voice.

"You've had a good living."

Again the woman laughed. "A good living—in Sundown! Why, I have lived day and night in fear of the law. I was a thousand times better off teaching back there in Nome."

"But listen, Kit," broke in Hibbing, endeavoring to stem the tide of her rising wrath. "I know it's rough on you up here, but it won't be long till we clean up stake enough to go outside—and then we'll make up for all this. We'll go to Frisco and New York, and the best they've got won't be any too good for us. The way I figure it we're partners. It's a fifty-fifty proposition."

The woman shot him a keen glance. "How much have we saved?" she asked.

Hibbing knitted his brow. "Well—I can't say. You see, most of it is tied up in claims, and until we unload there is no telling."

There was a hard look in the woman's eyes as she spoke: "From now on I am going to handle my share. As fast as we unload I want my half. Bring on your 'suckers,' as you call them, and I'll help you 'trim' them. You see, I have even learned to talk my part. But you've got to turn over my half as soon as you get your hands on it."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Hibbing in surprise.

"Nothing is the matter. I am only asking what is fair. Suppose something should happen to you—or you

should decide to skip out without me—where would I be?"

"Don't be a fool, Kit," retorted the man. "Why should I want to skip out? I wouldn't leave you if I did. There's no one in Sundown that knew us in Nome, or Iditirod, either. The rest are down on the Yukon. No one in this camp has got anything on me. Sorenson's satisfied, isn't he?"

The woman's lips curled. "I should think he would be. He bought a claim for eight thousand, and cleaned up twenty-seven thousand before fall. What a wonderful financier you are! Paid five hundred for a claim, spent a thousand salting it, and sold it for eight thousand. Then your 'sucker' started in and took more gold out of it than you ever saw."

Hibbing flushed. "How did I know there was a rich pocket a little deeper down?" he growled. "I'm no miner!"

"Of course not," Kit purred. "You couldn't be expected to recognize *honest* gold when you had it in your hand. How could you?" The man ground his teeth, as she continued: "But to go back to Burke. We are partners you said, didn't you? Well, when Burke hands over his fourteen thousand I want my seven thousand and you can have yours. And I don't need any treasurer to take care of my share of it, either."

Their eyes met. The green-gray eyes wavered, and with a gesture of resignation Hibbing picked up a book and threw himself into a chair. "Have it your own way," he snarled. "If you'd rather pack your roll around in your stocking than have it working for you, it's none of my business. But we'd better get our hands on the fourteen thousand before we start in to divide it."

CHAPTER III.

HOOKE.

The following evening Burke did not stop at Bill Weed's, but, continuing on past irregular and thinning groups of cabins, turned into a ravine whose patches of scrub timber loomed somber and black against the white base of the

snow mountain. At the edge of the timber a dull square of light shone from a cabin. And Burke saw that the window was curtained with white. Oddly enough that trivial fact touched him deeply. His heart warmed with a sense of intimacy. "Our kind of folks," Hibbing had said, when he had invited him to the cabin. And where else in Sundown would one find a window curtained with white?

A rabble of snarling husky dogs surged about him, the door flew open, and Hibbing stood framed in the oblong of light. A sharp command cut the frosty air like a pistol shot, and the dogs slunk to the rear of the cabin as the man's thin lips smiled a welcome.

He was a different figure from the parka-clad Hibbing that frequented Bill Weed's Bed Rock Saloon. Save for a pair of deerskin moccasins, the man was clad from head to foot in "store clothes." Over a shirt of soft gray flannel he wore a smoking jacket of red and green plaid, and Burke became suddenly conscious of his own rough garb. The next moment he was offering his hand to a simply gowned woman whose eyes of blue smiled frankly into his own as her hand met his in a clasp of manlike firmness.

Hibbing removed a few books from the rude center table, produced a cribbage board of home manufacture, and for an hour the three devoted their attention to the cards. "Clay tells me you haven't located a claim of your own," said the woman, as she pegged out her third straight game.

"No," smiled Burke. "I'm just a wop."

Kit laughed: "That's sensible—at least, until you get your bearings. Clay says there are mighty few good claims in Sundown, and when the dumps are cleaned up in the spring it will be a long line that will straggle back to the Yukon."

"There seem to be plenty of claims for sale," observed Burke.

Hibbing grinned. "I've got a dozen of 'em myself. Some of them are fairly good properties, but the rest are worthless. I really tied up more than

I should have. Of course I'll clean up a neat profit, but——"

His wife interrupted: "But if we had that money, we could——" She stopped abruptly and laughed, a short little laugh of embarrassment. "There is one good proposition in Sundown, Mr. Burke," she explained, "but I'm afraid it will take more money than we have to swing it."

Burke nodded. "Your husband mentioned it last evening."

"If we only had the money," said the woman, a little wistfully, "we could make enough to go home in the spring. I'm—I'm tired of this country! It's so big and lonesome and cold!" Burke noticed that her lip quivered slightly, and he shifted uneasily.

"There, there, little girl!" soothed Hibbing. "That's all right. We'll get the money somehow." He winked at Burke. "I could get it to-morrow by slipping out to-night and salting one of those claims of ours."

Kit shook her head. "Not that," she answered softly, "not if we stay here till we freeze!"

Hibbing stepped into an adjoining room, and returned a moment later with a handful of tiny buckskin pouches which he placed carefully upon the table. Seating himself, he opened a pouch and poured its contents onto a square of paper. Burke examined the little yellow pile with interest.

"Each of these pouches," explained Hibbing, "contains the gold from five test pans taken at the bottom of the shaft of this proposition. The shaft is only nine feet deep, and it is nearly fifty to bed rock. I guess Pat O'Reily can't pan out anything like that!" One by one he opened the little sacks.

Burke shook his head. "He sure can't," he agreed. "But why should a man with a claim like that want to sell?"

The thin lips smiled. "He's down in Dawson. His name is John Harvey. He's a chechahco that worked for a couple of months in the early fall. Did fairly well as far as he went. But he didn't like the idea of wintering here. Tried to sell me his claim,

and I offered him five thousand for it. It was a gamble at that, on the test panning, but he laughed at me. Said he'd take twenty-five thousand or nothing. You see, he'd got the idea that because there was gold in his gravel he could get any price he wanted for the outfit. I didn't think much more about it till a couple of months ago, and then just for fun I ran the shaft down two or three feet." Hibbing paused. "That's what I found at nine feet." He nodded toward the pile of little sacks. "And nobody knows it but me. What I've got to do is to sell myself this claim, and I've got to put twenty-five thousand dollars cold cash in that chechahco's hands to do it."

"And we've only got eleven thousand," broke in the woman, "and I'm afraid he'll sell out to somebody down in Dawson before we can raise the money."

For a long time Burke remained silent, his eyes resting upon the pile of little gold sacks. "Suppose I put up the balance," he asked at length, "would we operate the claim under a partnership agreement?"

Hibbing appeared to consider. "We could do that," he answered. "But the best way would be to hold it till spring and sell out to one of the big outfits down on the Yukon. We can double our money or triple it, and the other fellow takes the risk. I've handled a lot of propositions, and I know that there are a half a dozen outfits that will put up fifty or seventy-five thousand on those samples. And I know, too, that even at that they are taking a chance. Gravel at nine feet, and gravel at fifty are two different things. Generally it gets better farther down, but sometimes it don't. The main thing is to get hold of the property. We'll get our price all right. Just you wait till one of the big outfits sends an expert up to Sundown."

The woman listened with shining eyes. "Oh, then, next summer we could go back home!" she breathed. "I hate the North!"

Burke arose to go. "I guess I'll take a chance," he said. "The property

looks good to me, and if we can't unload it in the spring, we can tackle it together and at least get our money back."

"Don't you lose any sleep about not unloading," laughed Hibbing, as he accompanied Burke to the door.

The next morning in the little log shack adjoining Bill Weed's saloon that Hibbing called his "office," Burke counted out fourteen one-thousand-dollar bills and pocketed a memorandum of agreement. "How are we going to get the money to Dawson?" he asked.

"No hurry," answered Hibbing. "I'm authorized to make the sale. I'm agent for the owner."

"But suppose he's already sold out?"

The other laughed shortly. "That won't get him anything. Or, rather, the other fellow won't get anything. My power of attorney is attached to the deed. Did you notice the date of your memorandum?"

Burke produced the paper. The month was December, yet the memorandum was dated the tenth of October. "He left here on the eighth," continued Hibbing. "No one knows when this deal was put through, and the courts will uphold the prior sale."

The younger man stared a long time at the date. An uncomfortable feeling of guilt assailed him. And for a moment he was tempted to withdraw from the venture. "I don't exactly like that way of doing, Hibbing," he said frankly. "It don't—"

The man interrupted him: "You're pretty new yet. When you've been in the country as long as I have you'll learn not to split hairs. And besides, it isn't hurting any one. Harvey is getting all he asked—more than any one that don't know the property like I know it would give him, and if he has sold it, the fellow that buys it can come back on him for the purchase price." He arose and gathered up the bills. "I'll get Weed to lock this stuff in his safe," he said, and Burke returned to O'Reily's claim as Hibbing entered the saloon.

CHAPTER IV.

BURKE LOSES HIS JOB.

Supper over that evening, Pat O'Reily shoved his chair back from the table, tamped the tobacco into his pipe bowl, inverted it over the chimney of the coal-oil lamp, and puffed until his eyes bulged. With the tobacco aglow, he blew a cloud of gray smoke from his lungs, and, tilting his chair against the long wall, surveyed Burke across the dish-cluttered board. The usually garrulous Irishman had bolted his food in glum silence, and Burke, busy with his own thoughts, had not sought to break the other's taciturnity.

"Oi done some tist pannin' to-day, b'y." O'Reily removed the pipe from his mouth, spat into the wood box, and returned the pipe.

"How does she show?" asked Burke.

"Rotten!" answered the man in disgust. "She's run out complate. She's been runnin' worrse an' worrse, an' there ain't wan man's wages in the lasht lot, let alone th' two av us."

"Maybe she'll pick up," answered Burke hopefully.

"She'll niver! She's pethered out. Oi've gouged gravel befoore, an' Oi know th' soigns."

"Sorenson made his strike deeper than we are."

"Aye, an' be th' same token we won't. It wuz a funny deal altogether—that moine wuz. Funny, an' mebbe crooked, too."

"Crooked?"

"Aye, crooked," repeated the Irishman. "Hibbing's a crook, an' th' felly Sorenson's a fool, an' th' both av um made money. An' Dinny McGuire, th' only smarrrt wan av th' bunch, got nawthin'. He put more into it thin th' foive hundre' he got out av Hibbing."

"What was crooked about it?" asked Burke.

O'Reily scratched his chin. "Oi'm a sour dough," he began, "an' Dinny McGuire wuz a sour dough, an' we know gravel. But av coorse, in th' rush av th' shtampade, filin' wuz a mather av luck. Phwin Dinny got down into th'

gravel a ways, he knowed thin he'd drawed a blank. Th' gravel wuz whoite. It wuz bar gravel or top wash, an' his whole claim wuz a pocket av it. He wuz about to move on phwin along come this Hibbing an' offered him foive hundre' dollars for his howldin's. 'Twuz loike pickin' it off the floor, an' Dinny took it an' wint out over th' divoide. Thin it wuz Hibbing showed he wuz a fool as well as a crook. He salted that whoite gravel! 'Tis lucky for him it wuz Sorenson, who's th' grandest Shwade that iver come from Noorway, 'stead av some sour dough he undhertook to unload that claim onto; or they'd av drilled him where he stud. But Sorenson, th' big boob, goes in an' pans out the gold Hibbing planted in that whoite gravel, and pays Hibbing eight thousand dollars cash for th' claim. Thin he goes to work shcoopin' out th' whoite gravel onto a dump."

Once more O'Reily removed his pipe and spat into the wood box.

"Well?" asked Burke impatiently. "He made a strike, didn't he? I heard him say he cleaned up over twenty-seven thousand dollars before snow flew."

The Irishman nodded slowly: "He did. He kep' on goin' down an' down, pilin' up that whoite gravel, that wuz only fit for thrack ballast, onto his dump, an' thin he shtumbled onto wan av thim bits av luck that ye hear tell about, but don't niver see. 'Twuz a fold, or a fault, or wan av thim convalotions av nature that happened phwin th' earth wuz young an' subjec' to fits an' bellyaches an' th' loike. Th' whoite gravel bruk off short an' he run plumb into a pocket of sharp sand fair rotten wid gold. An' 'twuz th' same uphayval that turned me own claim upside down an' scattered a shmidgin av black sand on top an' left th' thrack ballast run clane t'rough to Chiney. Hibbing wuz a fool to salt whoite gravel, an' Sorenson wuz a bigger wan fer diggin' into it. But th' ould sayin' is: 'Gold's phwere ye foind it.' Fools foind it' an' woise min fail, an' its thrail is marked wid dead min's bones." O'Reily ceased

speaking and noisily replenished the stove. The intimation that Hibbing was a crook jibed with the antedated memorandum, and once more Burke thought of demanding the return of his money.

"No, sir!" he muttered. "I'll stay with it! If Hibbing's a crook, he'll find he's picked the wrong chechahco. He can't get away with anything till spring, anyway. If he's that kind of a bird, it's time somebody showed him up! Meanwhile, it's up to me to hunt a new job." Suddenly, at the recollection of the ever-increasing group of chair warmers that hugged Bill Weed's stove, he realized that there were no jobs in Sundown. Other claims besides O'Reily's had petered out. The scrap of conversation he had heard at Bill Weed's bar recurred to him, and he turned to O'Reily:

"Did you ever hear of flat gold?"

The Irishman regarded him thoughtfully. "Aye," he answered, "an' it's got more min than ever got it."

"What do you mean?"

"Oi mane this: Phwin a man hunts flat gold he hunts throuble. Gold is yaller—nuggets an' dust. 'Tis the way gold wuz meant to be. But flat gold is black an' soft an' heavy. 'Tis flat, loike coins from th' mints o' hell."

"But they've run across it in Alaska," objected Burke.

"Aye, here an' yon, a bit, mixed in wid th' yaller. 'Tis drifted an' hammered an' ground, an' no man knows phwere it comes from. They say it thravels through th' sand. They say"—leaning closer—"they say it saps min's brains! 'Tis th' price they must pay for th' foindin."

"You don't mean to tell me you *believe* that rot! I've heard there's flat gold beyond the divide. Did you ever hear of the Lillimuit?"

O'Reily shrugged: "Oi've hearrd av it. It lays yonder beyant th' mountains, an' divil a bit av good Oi've hearrd. 'Tis the divil's own shtampin' ground—a land of fey things an' weird. 'Tis there they say th' flat gold lays in pockets."

Burke nodded. "If the claim has run out, you won't be needing me any

longer. I was thinking maybe I'd throw an outfit together and cross the divide."

The front legs of the Irishman's back-tilted chair struck the floor with a thud, his gnarled hand grasped the bowl of his short black pipe, and he stabbed the air with the stem. "Acrosst th' divoide, is it!" he roared. "You! An' who'll go wid ye? An' phwat'll ye do phwin ye git there? Who be you to cross th' divoide phwin min loike Dinny McGuire don't come back?"

"Well, I thought maybe you'd go along," grinned Burke. "You can't clean up your dump till the thaw comes."

"*Me*, is it? 'Tis *me* ye want to go thrapsing off amongst thim domned peaks an' passes! *Me*, Pathrick O'Reily, ye want to go along wid yez to git froze whoite an' shtiff as a pily av salt, loike th' lady in th' Boible! An' go ravin' mad wid th' shtillness an' th' cowl'd, an' go tearin' about, black-lipped an' glare-eyed, till Oi bite mesilf in th' neck an' doie av hydrophoby! Oi tell ye 'tis th' land av divils! They say it goes to wan hundred below an' th' wather don't freeze! They say there's glaciers so big, if a man looses his footin' he goes slitherin' along f'r moiles an' moiles, an' th' cracks is so daype it takes you a year to hit bottom av ye fall in 'em. An' ye're axin' *me* to go 'long wid ye? But Oi'll not! No, sor, Oi don't want no such expayrience."

Burke laughed. "You're all right, O'Reily. But you know as well as I do most of that stuff is lies. When you have passed the mountains, they say the country's about like this."

"Aye—phwin ye've passed 'em," agreed the Irishman. "But 'tis th' pass-in'. An' av ye don't pass 'em, phwat thin?"

"There must be a trail. Old man Chaudiare comes and goes, and I've heard Hibbing has been across. I bet I can go any place Hibbing can."

"Sure there's a thrail—av ye know it. An' av ye don't know it——" He shrugged significantly, and laid a kindly hand on Burke's knee. "Hark

to me, b'y! Ye're a good lad. Oi loike ye foine. Me claim's run out, an' Oi can't kape on payin' ye wages, but don't ye worrit. There's grub enough in th' shack for th' two av us, an' av there ain't we'll git more. Ye're welcome to shstay as long as ye loike. In th' shpring we'll clane up th' dump an' thin we'll t'row in together an' begin all over ag'in—but not acrost yon di-voide."

Burke shook his head. "No, O'Reily," he said, "I'm not going to stick around here all winter eating your grub. If you won't go, I'll strike out for myself. Other men have crossed. And where other men can go I can go!"

"Aye, but they knowed th' thrail!"

"Yes, and I'll know it, too, by the time I get back. I'm going to roll in now. Much obliged for your offer—I won't forget. But if there's gold over yonder, I'm going to have a try at it."

CHAPTER V.

SERGEANT BLAKE ADVISES.

Burke set out the following morning to question Hibbing concerning the country beyond the divide. The Irishman's shack was at the lower end of the camp, and as he traversed the uneven trail, which was the main street of Sundown, the windlasses of a hundred shafts creaked loudly on the thin air. Men stood beside the black dumps at the mouths of the shafts, stamping and swinging their arms against the sting of the frost, or jumped to the windlass crank at the muffled cries of "Haul away!"

It was a familiar scene. For upward of a month Burke, too, had stamped and beaten his arms and cranked his windlass. At times he had hated the job—the muscle wrack and the monotony of it. But now, the moment he was free to go and come as he pleased, he found himself regarding these men who toiled with a feeling of envy. From the hillsides sounded the ring of axes, and here and there a rough sled, piled high with cordwood, was being man-hauled to the mouth of a shaft. If any one had then and there offered

him a job, he would have accepted it unhesitatingly, despite the zest of promised adventure in his half-formed idea of crossing the divide in search of flat gold.

"Takin' the rest cure?" asked a jovial voice at his side. Constable Conroy, who had stepped from the little cabin which was detachment headquarters of the Mounted, stooped to scoop up a bucket of snow.

"O'Reily's claim's petered out and I'm my own boss now."

Conroy looked grave. "There's a lot of claims petered out in Sundown," he said thoughtfully. "There's a lot of men idle. an'—well, winter ain't hardly set in yet. More claims will shut down. That'll mean more idle men. Something's got to be done. Men have got to eat. In a month they'll all be broke. I don't want to see another winter like ninety-seven and eight. What you going to do, Burke?"

The young man hesitated only an instant. "I'm going to hit the trail."

"Hit the trail! Where to? The trail ain't open to the Yukon. We expect a detachment up from Dawson by Christmas. Till they come, it looks like you fellows have got to stay."

"I'm not going to Dawson. I'm going to get me an outfit and cross the divide."

Conroy looked at him as though he had taken leave of his senses. "Cross the divide! Are you crazy?"

"There's gold over there," answered Burke, "and I'm going to get it!"

Conroy detected a trace of resentment in the tone. "That's all right," he hastened to add. "I was just kind of surprised. Come in an' have a cup of tea an' we'll talk it over with the sarge."

"I want to see Hibbing," objected Burke. "I——"

"Oh, come on! You can see Hibbing any time. Maybe you know what you're up against—crossin' the divide in winter, but chances is you don't. I've be'n acrost onct myself, an' Sergeant Blake's be'n clean to the MacKenzie three or four times."

As Burke followed the constable into

the room, Sergeant Blake looked up from the litter of papers that covered his packing-box desk. "'Nother claim petered out," said Conroy tersely. "O'Reily's. An' that ain't all. Burke, here, bein' out of a job, has took a notion to get hisself an outfit an' strike acrost the divide."

Sergeant Blake nodded thoughtfully, picked up a short black pipe from the desk, knocked it sharply against the stove, and filled it from the buckskin pouch. He lighted it and blew a cloud of blue smoke into the air. "Ever be'n over there?" he asked quietly. Burke shook his head. "Ever be'n anywhere? That is, have you ever done any winter trailing—alone?"

Again Burke shook his head. "No," he answered rather shortly. "But I never had the chance. Other men do it; I guess I can."

"Well, maybe—maybe; I don't say you can't." The sergeant fumbled among the papers on the desk. "Let's see, since we've be'n here there's one, two—there's six men crossed that divide besides Conroy and me. Three of them never came back. A fourth is in a padded cell down in Dawson. The other two are old man Chaudiare and Hibbing. Chaudiare lives over beyond. He knows the trail. And Hibbing followed him through. He got back before the snows. I can't tell you not to go, Burke, but I can tell you this: If you do go, you probably won't come back."

"You've been through. Haven't you got a map of the trail?" asked Burke.

"Yes, I can give you a map—but it won't do you much good. Everything looks alike till you strike the timber again. The Lillimuit's the worst tangle and jumble of peaks and passes on the face of God's earth. Takes a good man to trail through, and even if he's been through once it's no cinch he can make it again."

"But there's gold over there," insisted Burke.

"So they say," answered the sergeant dryly, "but no one has brought any out, except old Chaudiare, and his is flat gold."

Burke arose with a gesture of impatience. "You fellows make me tired!" he growled. "You talk of old man Chaudiare, and flat gold and crazy men and peaks and passes as if there's something supernatural about them. As a matter of fact, that country across the divide—the Lillimuit, you call it—is nothing but a *country*—a bit rough and jumbled perhaps, but it's nothing to be afraid of. Old man Chaudiare's a man, ain't he? And flat gold's gold? I tell you I'm going through there after gold, and I'm going to get it, too! Let me copy that map, will you?"

The sergeant rose from his chair and motioned Burke to the desk. "Help yourself, son," he said. "When you get it copied I'll go over it with you and tell you all I know. I see your mind's set on making a try, and I wish you good luck. I'd rather you weren't going. In plain words, I think you're a natural-born fool; you're a chechahco yet, you know. But there's a lot of fools tried the impossible up here in the big country, and some of 'em got away with it."

Burke arose and drew on his mittens. "I've got to hunt up an outfit now, but I'll be back and go over the map with you. There's no work in sight, and I'm not going to hang around these diggings like a hobo all winter. If I hit the trail for Dawson, it would be the same thing. I've noticed that it ain't the boys that sit around and spit on the stove that weigh in with the big pokes."

"That's so," agreed the sergeant, "but there's such a thing as a man being too dog-goned brash!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOUBLE CROSS.

Burke pushed open the door of Bill Weed's saloon. A dozen or more men who sat grouped about the red-hot stove cast inquiring glances as the newcomer walked past the deserted bar and joined them. Several nodded recognition. One or two called him by name.

Business was not brisk during the daylight hours in the Bed Rock, for the

spenders were also the workers, and the men who warmed the chairs were jobless men.

Bill Weed, leaning against the end of the bar, a black cigar screwed into the corner of his mouth, nodded pleasantly to Burke. "You don't need to say it," he began, with a smile. "O'Reily's claim's petered out. Beats business how hell keeps up, don't it?"

Burke laughed. "You guessed it. She's petered out all right."

"Well, don't worry," said Weed; "we've all be'n up agin' it. No matter what game a man bucks he can't play in luck *all* the time. If you're broke, jest pick you out a chair an' draw up to the stove an' cut your 'nitals into it so's the boys'll know you're a reg'lar an' not jest a transient." He pointed to a row of tables against the wall. "Them's poker tables—at night. But from seven to nine a. m., an' from twelve to two, an' from six to eight, in the evenin', they're dinin' tables. I've been up agin' it myself. The boys spends their money when times is good, an' no man in Sundown'll go hungry if every claim in the camp shuts down. Durin' the hours I've nominated, they'll be bread an' soup on them tables, an' sometimes meat. It'll be free, an' every man's entitled to all he can hold three times a day, an' in the spring we'll all be in shape to spit on our hands an' start over ag'in."

Burke glanced into the eyes of the man who was known as Yukon's squarrest gambler. "Good for you!" he exclaimed heartily. "But I don't believe I'll stick around. The fact is I'm going to hit the trail."

Bill Weed stared in surprise. "Hit the trail!" he repeated, and Burke noticed that the eyes of every man in the room had fastened a look of inquiry upon him. "Where to?"

"I'm going to hit across the divide and take a shot at the Lillimuit."

Weed rolled the black cigar to the opposite corner of his mouth, chewed the end viciously for a moment, and shrugged. "Don't like to say nothin' discouragin' to a man, but, Burke, if you cross that there divide you won't

come back. You'll stay there—sure as hell!"

"Other men have come back."

"Yes, an' a lot more of 'em ain't!" answered Bill Weed. "Outside of Hibbing an' the Mounted, there ain't no one come back that I know, 'cept old man Chaudiare, an' he lives there."

While he was speaking the door opened and Hibbing entered. The man halted suddenly, and his eyes swept the group with a sharp glance of inquiry.

"Hello, Burke," he said briskly. "What you doing here this time of day?"

"Just dropped in to see if you were here. I was headed for your cabin."

"What do you want of me?" The words sounded a trifle strained, and Bill Weed glanced at the speaker sharply.

"I want to find out something about the country beyond the divide. You've been over there, haven't you?"

"Yes, I've been there, but what's that got to do with you?"

"I'm going across," answered Burke. "I thought you might give me some dope on the country."

"You going across there?" asked Hibbing in surprise. "What's the matter with O'Reily's?"

"Petered out," answered Burke tersely.

"I've been tellin' him," broke in Bill Weed, "that there ain't a chanct in the world that he'll ever come out of there alive. Now you tell him. Mebbe he'll believe you; you've been there."

A sudden gleam leaped into Hibbing's eyes, and he laughed shortly. "Oh, I wouldn't say that, Bill. It's a rough country, but there's gold there. Old man Chaudiare's getting it. I've been over there, and I came back, didn't I?"

"How much gold did you fetch back?" asked Weed, with a sneer in his voice.

"The gold's there," answered Hibbing somewhat sulkily. "Maybe I had bad luck."

"An' mebbe you had pretty good luck to get back with your hide whole!"

Again Hibbing laughed. "Maybe I

did," he answered lightly, "but the fact is I got back, and I didn't find it so bad, either. The gold's there, and the man that's got nerve enough to go after it is going to get it."

"Why don't you go back an' git it, then?" challenged Weed.

"Maybe I don't like to force my luck," retorted Hibbing, and turned to Burke. "Step over to the office and I'll tell you all I know about the country. The gold's there. Old Chaudiare's getting it, but he's too foxy to file his claim. He knows the minute he files his location will go on record, and he'll have a stampede down on him in no time."

Bill Weed's eyes narrowed as the door closed behind the two men. "Wonder what his game is?" he muttered. "'The man that's got nerve enough is goin' to git it!' The kid'll jest plumb nachelly have to go now. He wants to git rid of Burke all right. Wonder if it's that woman?"

An hour later, as Burke shook hands with Hibbing in the door of the latter's office, every fiber of him tingled to the lure of flat gold. "I'm really sorry I found you here," he said. "I'd rather have gone on to the cabin. I want to say good-by to Mrs. Hibbing before I go. Suppose I drop around to-night for a game of crib."

Hibbing's face clouded with apparent concern. "Sorry, old man," he answered, "but my wife is sick. Bad cold on her lungs. Made her stay in bed this morning. Going to keep her there a couple of days. The fact is I'm dead scared of pneumonia. Saw a fellow die once in eight hours. Big, husky Swede he was, over in—over on the Yukon."

Burke's face clouded. It was a pleasant memory—that evening he had spent in Hibbing's cabin, where the mellow lamplight had revealed a woman wholly different from the painted women of the mining camps. A rare evening for a gouger of frozen gravel to spend in the company of this simply gownned woman who curtained her windows with white. He hated to think of her, sick—up there in the cabin, alone.

"Isn't there something I can do?" he asked.

Hibbing shook his head. "No, I think I can pull her through. I've had some experience."

Burke wondered if the curtness of the man's tone had been intentional. "Tell her I hope she'll get well right soon," he said a trifle awkwardly. "Tell her I'm sorry I couldn't see her before I left. I'd like to tell her how much I enjoyed the other evening. But I'll be back before spring. I don't like to butt in, Hibbing, but you better send her outside next summer, even if we have to stay and work the claim. This country's killing her."

Hibbing glanced up quickly. "Yes, to be sure," he answered. "Yes, I'll send her outside in the spring. Well, so long! Good luck to you! I won't see you before you go. I'll have to stay with her. Better get those dogs of Johnson's, if you can. They're good dogs, but he ought to be glad to sell 'em cheap. They're just lying around eating their heads off. How are you fixed for money? Got enough for an outfit?"

"Yes, plenty, but I won't have much left."

"You won't need any over there. I was going to say I could let you have a few hundred. But if you've got enough, all right. Don't take it too hard if you don't come back with a sledload of that flat gold, because we've got a good proposition right here—in the spring."

Burke wondered as he started in search of Johnson just how good a proposition he would have in the spring. And Hibbing, his thin lips pressed into their sneering smile, slammed the door of his office and walked hurriedly in the direction of the cabin. "It's up to me," he muttered between his teeth, "to keep cases on Kit till the chechahco gets over the divide. He's going to pull out in the morning. After that she can yell her head off. As soon as the Dawson Trail opens up, it's me for some camp beyond the Yukon. I can stall her off for a couple of days. The poor simp! She thinks I'm going to kick

in with half of Burke's roll. She's getting hard and money wise like all the rest of 'em. As long as she stayed different she was a big asset. But now—I'm through with her. And as for Burke—" he shrugged. "If he ever gets through that hundred and fifty miles of peaks and passes, old man Chaudiere will ride him—or the idiot!"

Kit watched Hibbing narrowly as he drew off his parka and seated himself at the table. "Well," she asked abruptly, "did you go down to O'Reily's?"

"Didn't have to," answered Hibbing shortly. "O'Reily's quit."

"What about Burke?" The woman shot him a keen glance.

"Oh, he's all right. I found him at Bill Weed's."

"Did he give you the money?"

Hibbing shook his head. "Not yet," he answered as he piled his plate high with food.

A gleam of suspicion flashed into the blue eyes. The woman faced Hibbing with features drawn and tense. Her fingers rested upon the table top, and she leaned forward until the knuckles whitened.

"You are lying to me!" The words hissed between clenched teeth. "He gave you that money yesterday!" There was a ring of certainty in the tone that for an instant caused Hibbing to wonder whether she had, by any chance, communicated with Burke. He dismissed the thought and laughed sneeringly.

"Oh, he did, did he? Guess I must have been asleep—and Burke, too, because he's going to do it again to-morrow."

The woman sank into her chair. "What did he say?" she asked dully.

"Said he'd be up here to-morrow night and bring the money. He's a little bit leary, I guess. He didn't say so in so many words, but I think he wanted to have a talk with Sorenson. Let him go to it. Sorenson don't know that deal wasn't all straight. But that isn't the best of it. O'Reily's claim's petered out, and Burke's got it into his head to cross the divide. Figures on

getting an outfit and starting in about a week. It will save us the trouble of making a get-away. Because once he crosses that divide it's good-by Burke! He'll never come back."

"Suppose he goes without turning over the fourteen thousand? Why don't he come to-night, instead of to-morrow night?"

"Tried to get him to," answered Hibbing, "but he said he couldn't. Said he had to square up with O'Reily to-night. He'll be here to-morrow night, though. He won't pass up a chance to make a piece of easy money. He's hooked. Of course, if he *does* pass it up, that's our hard luck. We'll have to hunt another sucker—that's all."

For a long moment the woman stared at the food, untouched, upon her plate. "Honestly, Clay?" she asked at length, her voice almost whining in its appeal. "Are you telling me the truth?" Her long, slim fingers worked nervously. "Oh, if I could only trust you! But you won't cheat me, will you?"

Hibbing smiled soothingly. "Just wait until to-morrow night, and when Burke comes across I'll let you handle the coin. And all the rest, too, as soon as I unload a claim. I'll let you do the dividing. I'm not afraid to trust you, even if you don't trust me."

CHAPTER VII.

BILL WEED.

The stars gleamed white and cold in the black dome of the night sky when Burke stepped from the door of Pat O'Reily's cabin, and with the Irishman's help harnessed his eight big Malemutes to the waiting sled. It was four o'clock, and many hours must elapse before the first light of dawn would penetrate to the little valley in which Sundown nestled just within the arctic circle. The sled had been loaded the night before, and as the harness was slipped onto the last of the restless dogs, Burke seized hold of the tail rope and turned to the somber-faced Irishman.

"So long, O'Reily," he called cheerfully. "See you again in the spring."

The man shook his head dolefully. "Wanst more, b'y, Oi'm axin' ye av ye won't change yer moind. But av ye won't listen to rayson, ye'll do me th' favor, av ye run acrost Dinny McGuire over yondher, bury him daycent—an' may th' nixt do th' loikes by yer-silf."

Burke promised, and at the crack of his long-lashed whip the dogs sped swiftly up the trail with the young man running lightly behind.

Sundown lay shrouded in darkness, save for the red flare of the fires that thawed out the gravel for the day's digging. From the log stockade of detachment headquarters of the Mounted came the chorus of growls and barks with which the police dogs challenged the early passing of the team.

An angle of the trail brought the outfit in sight of the Bed Rock Saloon, where a dull square of light shone through the little front window. The Bed Rock and its rival, the Tivoli, were never closed. Burke halted the dogs and pushed open the door. He was surprised to find Bill Weed himself on duty, the inevitable black cigar screwed into the extreme corner of his mouth. Another man stood with his elbow resting upon the corner of the bar. Both looked up, and Burke noted with surprise that the other was Corporal Conroy, of the Mounted.

"Which is it?" he grinned. "Late at night or early in the morning? Haven't you fellows gone to bed, or have you just got up?"

Conroy returned the grin. "Oh, we've been to bed all right, but we ain't just got up at that. Fellow over on the hillside mistook his foot for a stick of cordwood, an' his pardner come over to get me to fix him up. Bill made me bring him over here, where we can look after him handier." He indicated the back room with a jerk of his head.

"Good stuff!" approved Burke. "And that reminds me I stopped in to do a little philanthropy myself." He reached into his pocket and tossed a buckskin pouch onto the bar. "Here, Bill, take this," he said. "I won't need it where I'm going. It's what I had left after

buying my outfit. I don't know how much there is, but it ought to keep the bunch in tobacco for the rest of the winter." He motioned with a jerk of his thumb toward the still forms of the down-and-outers, who lay like logs between their blankets on the floor near the stove. "You've undertaken to feed 'em; I guess I can keep 'em in tobacco. Needn't bother to tell 'em where it comes from; just toss it out to 'em when they run shy."

Bill Weed nodded, and, shifting the cigar to the other corner of his mouth, lifted the buckskin pouch and slipped it into a drawer. "Well, I must be mushing," said Burke. "I'll buy a drink, but you'll have to take the price out of the poke. I'm broke."

Weed set out a black bottle and two small glasses, and as Constable Conroy poured out his liquor the proprietor stepped to the stove at the rear of the room. Conroy set the bottle down, and Burke filled the other glass. Both noted the absence of a third glass, and awaited Weed's return. A moment later the proprietor faced them. Instead of a glass he placed a porcelain cup, from which steam arose, upon the bar. Reaching deftly, he picked up the glass which Burke had just filled, and substituted in its place the thick porcelain cup. Burke stared in surprise at the steaming liquid as Weed raised his glass.

"Here's how, an' good luck to you!"

Burke continued to stare into the cup. "Well, what the devil!" he exclaimed.

Bill Weed laughed. "It's tea for youn, kid. You're new yet, an' there's lots of trail tricks you ain't wised up to. It's forty below outside right this minute, an' you're hittin' a long trail. There ain't a sour dough in the country but would jest as soon stick a loaded gun in his mouth and pull the trigger as to face the trail you've got to face this day with red liquor in under his belt. An' speakin' of guns, how you heeled?"

"I've got a .30-30 strapped on my sled and a hundred rounds of ammu-

nition. Guess that's good enough for any game I'll see."

Weed turned, and, sliding open the drawer into which he had tossed Burke's pouch, withdrew a leather holster from which dangled straps. Corporal Conroy looked on with interest as the proprietor of the Bed Rock pulled from the holster a blue-black automatic.

"This here gun," he said, patting it with genuine affection, "is the only one like it in the Territory. She's a Web-ley, an' she'll shoot a little farther an' a little wickeder an' a little quicker than any other gun in these parts." He came slowly around the bar. "Jest you pack this here gat along with you, kid. She straps on like this. Pull up yer parka."

"But I don't need a gun, Weed. What in thunder do I want an automatic for? Nobody but a tinhorn or a chechahco packs 'em in this country."

Conroy said nothing, but looked on in surprise.

Bill Weed chewed the stub of his black cigar and grinned. "Well, ain't I jest got through tellin' you yer a chechahco? H'jst up yer arms an' let me harness you. You'll find half a dozen clips of ca'tridges in the holster."

Still Burke protested: "But I don't need your gun, Bill. It'll just be more weight, and it's the last thing in the world I'll use."

Weed proceeded to fasten the straps. "Mebbe 'tis, an' mebbe 'tain't," he said. "An' look-a-here, kid, will you do me a favor?"

"Sure," answered Burke quickly.

"Then you wear this here gun constant an' continual—like your muk-luks!" His face suddenly hardened, and he snapped out a question: "Be I a sour dough, or ain't I?" Burke grinned. "Be I or ain't I?" persisted Bill Weed.

"You are!"

"Be I your friend, or ain't I?"

"You are!"

"Then wear that gun!"

"I will," said Burke, with mock solemnity.

"An' now git out of here!" said

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Weed. "'Tain't gittin' you nothin' to hang round in this here overhet room with all them clothes on. If yer so hell-bent on committin' suicide by trailin' out into that there Lillimuit country, the quicker you git at it the better."

"You're a cheerful hombre!" laughed Burke as he turned to the door. "So long!"

"So long! Good luck!" called Conroy and Bill Weed in chorus, so lustily that even the sleepers by the fire stirred.

The door closed with a bang. A moment later, to the loud crack of a dog whip and cries of "Hi! Mushu! Mushu!" Dan Burke swung up the main street of Sundown and headed for the great white country beyond.

When the sounds had died away in the distance Conroy bent a questioning look upon Bill Weed. "What was the idee of the side gun?" he asked.

Weed shrugged. "I don't know myself," he answered, "but jest between me an' you I don't quite like the looks of the way things is framed. Hibbing eggin' Burke on that-a-way yesterday to head into the Lillimuit was enough to make me suspicion somethin'. Hibbing must have some reason, I figgers. Nobody ain't goin' to tell anybody to go kihootin' off where he knows he'll get bushed lessen he's got some reason fer it. Then I happened to rec'lect that him an' Burke spent some consid'ble time, couple of days back, in Hibbing's office, after which Hibbing brung a long envelope an' asked me to stick it in the safe. Then when the kid outfits hisself he pays Scotty with a bran'-new thousan'-dollar bill, an' Scotty, not wantin' so much big change on hand, brung it to me to bust. When I goes to stick it in the safe I seen the envelope Hibbing had give me a couple of days ago. An idee hits me, an' I lifts it out an' steams the flap." Bill Weed paused and lip-rolled his dead cigar into the other corner of his mouth, while Conroy waited expectantly. "It was jest as I figgered," the proprietor continued. "In that there envelope was fourteen bran'-new thousan'-dollar bills. The numbers was all

in a row, except where one was missin' an' the one Scotty had give me was the missin' bill. That give me what I was huntin' for—the reason Hibbing was so anxious to get Burke over the divide."

Conroy produced a thick brier pipe, which he filled from a beaded pouch. "Well, even at that, Bill," he objected, "Hibbing prob'ly had a right to them bills: You sure don't think he robbed Burke? It's his business to buy an' sell claims. Which may be crooked enough, but it ain't against the law. He sold Sorenson his claim, an' he prob'ly sold Burke one, too."

Bill Weed nodded wisely. "Yeh," he grunted, "an' there's more to that Sorenson deal than folks knows about. Some of the old-timers *suspicion* what was pulled off, but me—I *know*! Hibbing stood right there where yer standin' now when Sorenson come bustin' in with the news of his big strike. It was 'bout a month after Hibbing had sold him the claim. Course every one crowded round Sorenson, elbowin' an' shovin' for a look at his gold. All but me, an' I watched Hibbing. 'Cause I knowed it was a plant from the first, an' you'd ort to seen his face! It sure was comical the way his jaw sagged down. He leaned heavy against the bar fer a minute, with his tongue runnin' aimless an' foolish like round his lips, an' them little green eyes of his'n a-snappin' like a snake's. I ain't had nothing tickle me more sence I called the turn for ten thousan' one night down to Dawson. But I never let on, an' direc'ly Hibbing got ahold of hisself. He wormed his way through the crowd an' grabbed Sorenson's hand an' told him he was glad he'd struck it lucky. It was a good bluff, an' he got by with it. But, believe me! Sorenson didn't have one chanct in a million of takin' anythin' out of that there claim—except what little Hibbing had mixed in the sand to salt it."

"But even at that, Bill, there couldn't nobody prove nothing on Hibbing, even if Sorenson hadn't made a strike. An' it's the same if he sold a claim to Burke. When a man sells a claim he

don't guarantee nothin', an' if Burke bought a claim off Hibbing it's his own fault if he's stung.

"That's right," admitted Weed, "but somehow I don't believe Burke bought no claim. Burke's a chechahco, same as Sorenson, but he ain't no fool. An', besides, if Hibbing had sold him a claim an' give him the papers, he wouldn't have no reason to put Burke out of the way. No, siree, Hibbing's got a better reason than that for wantin' to git rid of him. He never got that money in no honest an' straightforward swindle. I tell you Hibbing'll bear watchin'. He knows the country beyond the divide, an' he might take a notion to cinch the thing. If he does, Burke ain't no worse off fer havin' that there gat on him."

Conroy assented, and together the two tiptoed their way among the blanketed sleepers to the rear room, where the wounded man lay in Bill Weed's own bunk with his foot swathed in a mountain of bandages. The man moved slightly, and a groan escaped him, but he smiled into the faces of the two who stood in the doorway. Weed raised a black bottle from a bench beside the bunk and held it to the man's lips. "How you feelin'?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm all right. Foot hurts like sin, but that can't be helped. You've got to move me out of here to-day. I ain't a-goin' to crowd no man out of his own bunk."

"You shut up an' lay quiet, old-timer," laughed Weed; "that's your job. I happen to be runnin' this here Bed Rock dump, an' what I says goes—not you."

As the men returned to the bar, Conroy tied down his ear flaps and drew on his mittens. Suddenly Bill Weed halted.

"Where's that ax?" he cried.

"Ax?" asked the astonished constable. "What ax?"

"Why, the ax he sunk into his foot, of course!"

"Search me; I don't know. Layin' back there on the hillside where we found him; I guess."

Weed wriggled into his parka. "Where you going?" asked Conroy.

"I'm goin' to git that ax! No wonder his foot's a-hurtin' him, with the ax that cut him layin' out there with the frost in it. He never will git no better till that there ax is brung in an' warmed." Weed jerked the hood of his parka over his head, stalked back to the stove, and kicked at the ribs of a sleeper until he awoke, growling and rubbing his eyes. "Git up and run the joint," he said tersely, "till I git back."

The man crawled out of his blanket, yawning prodigiously, as Weed made for the door. "If I thought there was any sense in it, I'd go get the ax myself," called Conroy. "You'd better wait till daylight, anyway, I'm thinkin'."

"Go home an' crawl in your blankets, an' think what you want to. I'll go git the ax. The misery in that fellow's foot ain't a-waiting till no daylight!"

Two hours later Weed again entered the room, and, striding to the stove, immersed the steel of a double-bitted ax in a kettle of hot water. For a matter of five minutes he stood plunging the ax in and drawing it out until the metal was warmed to blood heat; then, leaning the ax against the wall, tiptoed to the door at the rear of the room and softly opened it. The man on the bunk was asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEYOND THE DIVIDE.

The trail that Dan Burke followed was a trail in name only—a route that was indicated on Sergeant Blake's rough-sketched map by a heavy black line which marked the course of tortuously winding creeks and the position of high white divides among a titanic confusion of peaks. The going was good. The sled runners slipped smoothly over the hard-crusts snow that furnished an excellent footing for the dogs. Burke held to the creek bed, and, with his rackets upon the top of the load, fell into a long, swinging trot that ate up the miles of the snow trail and brought him, at the end of an hour and a half, to the sloping base of a

mountain. It was the rise to the divide, and, swinging the dogs from the creek bed, he headed them onto a terrace that cut the shoulder of the mountain in a long slant. The pace slowed to a walk. Although the trail remained hard and fairly smooth, the pitch of its ascent made the dogs settle down and hump to the pull. Daylight was touching the higher levels with a delicate tinting of gray—a tinting that softened the jagged sky line of chiseled peaks, paled the steely gleam of the little stars of the night sky, and transformed the timbered valleys into yawning pits of blackness.

In the distance loomed the scarped summit of the divide—the divide beyond which lay the man-dreaded Lillimuit—the land of fey things, O'Reily had said, and of flat gold, Hibbing. With a whoop, he resumed the upward climb.

It was well toward noon when he reached the pass and caught his first glimpse of the low-hung winter sun. For many moments he stood, rigid as a carved statue, there on the roof of the world, gazing out into the east. Breathing deeply, with lips tight pressed, he stared, wide-eyed, as his groping brain grasped at the vastness of the mass of peaks and ice crags that stretched endlessly before him. Dazzling white mountains rolled skyward to terminate in gleaming peaks and pinnacles of ice. Tumbled moraines and straight-sided, chasmlike valleys lay bathed in eternal shadow. Five suns gleamed in the sky—suns that flickered and flared with a weird, unearthly light.

There was something unreal—almost bizarre in the fantastic hodgepodge of the frozen desert, with its four false suns. It seemed that he gazed, not upon an actuality, but upon a master brain's conception of ultimate chaos. Men had crossed the very divide upon which he now stood and had never returned. Burke was conscious of an uncomfortable sensation in the region of his belt line—an unpleasant emptiness that suggested no pang of hunger. A dog whimpered uneasily, and, pulling himself together with a short, hard

laugh, he swung the team into the shelter of an upstanding ice pinnacle, and proceeded to fumble his pack for food. Over his tiny petrol stove he boiled a pot of tea, and, seated upon a robe, devoured a liberal portion of pemmican and bannock. He lighted his pipe, and, fumbling in his parka hood, produced the map which he spread upon his knee.

"The trail bears to the left," he said aloud, and started at the sound of his own voice. Once more his eyes roved the white wilderness as if to trace the course of the trail. But beyond the foot of the long, steep slope his gaze could not penetrate the confusion. At the bottom, he knew, lay a narrow valley which he must follow for a day before crossing another divide into another narrow valley. He arose and arranged his pack. No breath of air stirred. The whole dead land seemed oppressed, buried beneath the calm of an awful stillness. A calm that was a thing inexpressible, intangible; that pressed and weighed upon him—smothering him. The world was a soundless void—vast, uncopied, white.

He started suddenly as the unnatural stillness was riven by the roar of a thousand thunders, and screamed nervously, like a woman. And like a woman's voice, his voice sounded shrill and tiny and thin. A quarter of a mile away a thick ice crag tore loose and hurtled into an abyss, leaving a broad scar that gleamed green where only whiteness had been. The thunder died away, the snow dust settled, and again the Lillimuit lay silent, with the silence of the dead.

Burke's garments clung clammy with a cold sweat, and the frost devils that nipped at his cheeks floated before his eyes in tiny points of white. Above the far-flung mountains the real sun and the four false suns wavered and danced. He turned and glanced over the back trail. Long and earnestly he gazed into the wide valley of the deep shadows out of which he had just toiled, and where, far to the westward, nestled the little cabins of Sundown. In the distance the timber made an

indistinct edging of black, and for a long moment the young man hesitated; then, with a muttered imprecation, leaped to his brake pole and headed his dogs down the steep slope to the eastward, into the land of whiteness throughout the length and breadth of which was to be found no living, growing thing.

That night he camped at the foot of an ancient moraine that slanted from the side of a dead glacier. He managed to build a fire with bits of gnarled cedar that he hacked and twisted from among the snow-buried rocks of the moraine. Again he spread out his map and indicated what he judged to be his location with a knife-point perforation. He tossed a fish apiece to his dogs, and proceeded to devour his own supper of pilot bread and bacon and tea.

"Four days at this rate will put me through. I'll sure be glad to strike the timber country again. But they all made it out worse than it is—all except Hibbing."

The fire died down, and, without removing his sweat-dampened garments, Burke crawled between his robes and blankets. Before pulling the robe over his head he glanced upward. High above his ice-walled valley and the towering peaks beyond little stars glowed in the night sky. Unlike the white points of brilliance of the previous night, they shone dull, waxing and waning in the changeful flare of the aurora. As he looked a broad streamer of snow dust writhed from a towering peak. Whiter and denser it grew, and longer, reaching into the south. And then the fierce whine of wind was borne to his ears as it shrieked among the naked peaks.

The dogs, which had curled up into balls on the crust, stirred uneasily, sniffed the dead air, and crowded close between the blankets and the sled, whimpering uneasily.

The motionless air of the narrow valley swirled, deadened to a calm, and swirled again, scattering the ashes of the dying fire broadcast upon the surface of the snow. The far whine of the wind changed to a dull roar, and

the air about the little camp pounded the walls as if seeking escape, and in a long series of giant puffs went shrieking southward through the cañon.

Burke shuddered as he drew the robe tightly about his head. When he awoke hours later he was shivering. His dampened garments struck a chill to his very bones. He raised the robe and looked out. The roar of the wind as it tore through the narrow gorge was like nothing he had ever heard, and overhead he could see no stars. He pulled the robe over his face, fumbled for his watch, and, after some difficulty, struck a match. It was three o'clock.

"Too early to hit the trail," he growled, and closed his eyes. But sleep would not come. He was cold. He wriggled his arms and legs to induce circulation, turned on his side, and drew his knees close, cuddling against the dogs, which lay in a row along the edge of the robe. A sour dough would have slept warmly, for he would have slept dry. True, in the morning he would have muttered unholy things as he drew on his ice-stiffened garments, but he would have faced the day trail fit after a night of rest. At forty below zero a man's inner garments may be damp all day without inflicting serious discomfort, but at night he must sleep warmly. And to be warm he must be dry.

An hour passed and Burke gave up his attempt to sleep. He wriggled from his blankets, and, with chill-numbed fingers, groped for his petrol stove. The wind that sucked through the cañon precluded any thought of a wood fire, even if he could have found the wood. He contrived a shelter with the robes and tarp, and boiled a pot of tea, which he drank scalding hot between huge mouthfuls of pilot bread. The hot tea warmed him, and, without waiting for daylight, he packed the sled, harnessed the dogs, and headed southward through the cañon. With the wind at his back he made good progress, his tawny leader sagaciously picking the way among the boulders and ice hummocks that littered the floor of the valley.

Hour after hour he mushed, busy

with gee pole and tail rope, easing the sled over hummocks and around boulders. Gray daylight filtered into the valley, but the weather had thickened so that no peaks were visible beyond the ice-rimmed walls. It grew colder. Burke's parka hood became frost-rimmed where it circled his face. But the work of the trail sent the blood coursing through his veins, and he was warm. A huge rock, sharply triangular, loomed in the trail ahead, and Burke immediately halted the dogs. It was the landmark indicated upon the map. He whirled the dogs to the eastward, and headed them up a lateral moraine that slanted to the surface of the low glacier.

After two hours of hard climbing the dogs scrambled over the rim, and squatted low against the crusted surface of the snow. Burke followed, puffing with the exertion, and the next moment found himself stretched flat upon the ice, but still firmly gripping the tail rope. For the first time the outfit was exposed to the full sweep of the icy hurricane that drove out of the north with the shriek of a thousand demons. The heavily loaded sled rocked, slued sidewise, and brought up against an ice hummock, where it hung trembling in the shock of the gale that threatened to tear the pack from its lashings. Burke rolled into the lee of the sled, and lay gasping for the air that was being sucked from his very lungs. He raised his head and glanced over the wind-swept plain. The dogs lay flat on their bellies, their wide-spread nails digging deeply into the hard surface of the snow.

The map called for a journey of eight miles due east before the shelter of another valley could be gained. Burke wondered whether it would be possible to hold a course at right angles to the wind that gripped and tore at the outfit as though to lift it bodily and hurl it back into the valley. Icicles clung now to the rim of his parka hood, and the chill of the deadly cold was beginning to numb. The steep climb had started the perspiration from every pore, and upon the inside of his parka

the body damp was congealing in white frost.

He struggled to his feet, clawing at the sled for support. His clumsy mittens found no hold on the frost-stiffened tarpaulin with its tight-drawn lashings, and he was hurled backward onto the snow. Once more he crawled to the sled, and with an effort worked himself to his feet. He yelled at the dogs, but the sound was torn from his lips. He swung the heavy whip, and the leader sprang to his feet, dragging his teammates after him. For a few yards they held the course; then, turning tail to the wind, headed southward. A mile was traversed before Burke succeeded in halting the outfit. Sergeant Blake had cautioned him particularly against bearing to the southward, as the surface of the glacier was cut by a series of treacherous chasms and crevasses.

Burke cut a length from a coil of babiche, and, fastening it to the leader's collar, led the outfit on a long slant to regain the trail. The rough snow ice of the glacier furnished excellent footing, else no human being could have kept his feet against the force of the gale. The man soon caught the knack, however, and as he traveled leaned on the wind at an angle of forty-five degrees.

CHAPTER IX.

THE END OF THE TRAIL.

Hour after hour Burke plodded, gaining his ground by hard-fought feet and inches. His objective, a point where the trail reached the valley by means of a long slide, was marked by the jutting spur of a huge snow mountain.

His limbs felt numb, and he grew faint with hunger. His dry throat burned with a terrible thirst. During the whole short day he had caught no glimpse of the sun, and as night fell dark scuds of wind-torn fog swept past, blotting the landmarks from sight. Burke reckoned he still had a mile to go when the first spit of snow stung his face. Only a few pellets, but hard and

dry as shot—pellets that were hurled horizontally through the air and that seared and bit into his face like points of red-hot iron.

The thought of being forced to make a fireless camp on the surface of the wind-swept glacier terrorized him. He redoubled his efforts, his brain fairly lashing his muscles to their task. The storm increased in fury, and between the flying fog clouds the mountains showed dimly through the slant of the driving snow. The hiss with which the shotlike pellets rasped the glacier sounded above the noise of the wind. Burke lowered his head and bored on. He had almost reached the mountain when suddenly the surface of the glacier seemed to drop away into darkness. It was the slide! Here, the sergeant had said, one might safely coast into the valley below. Clumsily the man's mittened hands cast the harness from the dogs and secured it upon the sled, which he slowly worked over the edge. The runners sank deeply into the softer snow, and, with a firm grip on the brake pole, Burke leaped upon the pack and allowed the outfit to travel slowly down the long slope, to bring up, fifteen minutes later, on the level floor of a valley.

In the absence of wood, Burke again had recourse to his petrol flame, and, despite the cold, devoured a hearty meal. With the absolute infallibility of a chechahco to do the wrong thing, he once more crawled between his blankets and robes without removing his clothing. As upon the previous night, he awoke chilled to the bone, fumbled for his watch, and struck a match. But this time it was one, instead of three, o'clock. And despite his day of bone-wracking toil, the chill of his damp garments refused him sleep.

For two hours he tossed and thrashed about in an effort to warm himself, and, failing, swallowed a hasty breakfast and hit the trail. The wind had moderated during the night, but snow fell thickly. The going was heavy and progress slow. One of the dogs showed signs of distress. Burke cut him loose, and the animal, with tail

dragging the snow, crept along in the rear.

During the afternoon another dog gave out, and toward evening another. Burke was in harness now, doing the work of three dogs. At night he camped at the foot of the last divide. Only one of the discarded dogs had managed to crawl into camp, and, drawing his automatic, Burke shot him. In vain he searched the valley for wood with which to build a fire, but found not even so much as the gnarled bits of cedar that had furnished the scanty heat for his first camp.

That night there was no sleep, and at short intervals he drank scalding tea to keep from freezing. In the morning he tackled the low divide. His limbs felt strangely heavy and his head light. He harnessed his five dogs, and with his shoulder to the load headed the outfit out of the valley. The storm died down, but a foot of fresh-fallen snow impeded his progress. An hour's toil netted but a scant two hundred yards, and Burke stared in dismay at the half mile of unbroken snow that interposed between him and the sky line. Leaving the sled, he broke a trail to the top. After that progress was better. As the day wore on he began to talk wildly and incessantly. The summit was reached before dark, with only four dogs in harness. These he fed liberally, and, after consuming much tea and pilot bread, decided to travel by the light of the stars. He was not tired now, but his limbs felt heavy and slow to obey the commands of his brain. Why should a man go to bed when he could not sleep?

After a rest of two hours he harnessed the dogs. Only three were fit for the trail. The other staggered about with his nose at the level of the snow. Burke laughed loudly, shot the sick dog, and recklessly threw away half his pack.

"Only seventy or eighty miles to the timber, and then, hooray for a fire!" he shouted, and laughed again. "Or, is it a hundred and eighty? I don't remember! Maybe the map is wrong. But this must be the trail. I ought to

make it to-morrow or to-morrow night or next day or some other day. Anyhow, I'm going on." Remembering the snow was deep, he fastened on his rackets and broke trail down the valley.

On and on he mushed with the three dogs following in his tracks, dragging the lightened sled heavily through the soft snow. Burke, strong of frame and iron-hard of muscle, held a good pace. At midnight he camped, fed the dogs, and ate heartily. Without unrolling his blankets, he sat in the snow with his back against the sled; in which position he fell asleep, to awaken an hour later numbed and nearly frozen. Staggering stiffly to his feet, he swung off down the valley. Suddenly he realized that the dogs were not following. He had thrown away his whip, but retraced his steps, and beat them to their feet with a double babiche.

At daylight he again cut the load in half, and the three dogs did better, heartened to the pull by a slab of bacon instead of a frozen fish. All day long Burke mushed eastward, pausing occasionally to eat and feed the dogs. He had become absolutely reckless of his grub; his one obsession being to gain timber and build a fire. After that there would be game—so why save grub? The three dogs, under the lightened load and the increased feed, were traveling in good heart, and Burke, laughing, singing, talking wildly to himself, his legs working automatically like parts of a well-oiled machine, fairly ate up the miles of the long snow trail.

Daylight vanished, and the stars shone out, but unmindful of the transition the man held to the trail which stretched away, endless and white in the wavering glow of the aurora. Hours passed, and, with unslackened pace, he mushed down the center of the long snow valley.

On the sweep of a wide bend, he halted abruptly and gazed foolishly about him. The mittened hand which he passed across his eyes loosened a shower of frost spicules from the rim of his parka hood. The sting of the tiny frost bits upon his face roused

him, and with an effort he forced his brain to take cognizance of his surroundings. The sides of the valley had disappeared. Long hills rolled away to the right and to the left, and before him the snow was swallowed up in blackness. The hills also appeared dark, with only an occasional white patch that gleamed in sharp contrast. They were low hills and rolling, not at all like the high-flung ice crags that had mocked and flaunted their hideous nakedness before him from the moment he crossed the first divide.

His eyeballs burned, and his throat felt hot and dry. He scooped up a handful of snow, and, pressing it to his lips, whined like a dog at its searing touch. Suddenly the significance of the black hills crashed upon his numbed brain with the force of a blow.

"Timber!" he moaned thickly, and the word was unintelligible to his ears. His swollen tongue filled his mouth, and he gasped and panted for air. His heart thumped wildly. He whirled, and, shaking a fist toward the mountains behind him, filled his lungs to shout for joy. The attempt ended in a shrill, horrible scream that sent the dogs cowering and trembling against the sled. Babbling thick sounds, he leaped toward the pack, and, after much fumbling, drew his knife and cut the lines of babiche that bound the lightened load. Feverishly he ripped the tarpaulin from the pack, scattering the contents helter-skelter until he grasped the handle of his ax. With no thought of pack or outfit, he clutched the ax in both hands, and, with a horrible, throaty laugh, leaped for the timber that showed, black and indistinct, a half mile away.

The dogs crept dejectedly to their feet and followed in the trail of the man. After a few steps the leader halted, glanced uncertainly toward the hurrying figure, and backward at the sled. Clearly something was wrong. The tarpaulin was dragging in the snow and the back trail was littered with the contents of the pack. Moreover, the man continued to plunge forward without once looking back. The smell of

food was in the air, and the leader sniffed and whimpered.

Burke plowed on with no heed to the trail, his eyes upon the black stretches of timber. He blundered against a ledge of rock, and, regaining his feet, plunged forward with an unintelligible curse at the delay. Spring freshets had gouged a channel across his path, but Burke gave no heed to the chasm that yawned wide and deep at his very feet. Mumbling and muttering, he lunged forward. There was a swift rush of air, and vaguely he knew he was falling.

A quarter of a mile up the valley the lead dog continued to sniff the air. Turning in the traces, he eyed the scattered pack, and approached the sled, stiff-legged and growling. Meat was upon the snow—and bread. His quivering nose came in contact with a bag of pemmican, and the dog leaped swiftly backward with lips curling wickedly from the long white fangs at the memory of the sting of the gut lash which had rewarded previous pilfering of the food from the man brute's packs. He whirled to dodge the expected blow, and the green-blazing eyes scanned the white surface of the snow that stretched unbroken to the timber. But the man brute was nowhere to be seen, and with a snarl he leaped upon the coveted food, slashing viciously at the other two dogs, which slashed as viciously in return. The sled was overturned, and the harness tangled inextricably, as the snarling brutes fought over the food in the snow. An hour later, when no food remained, the leader and his two followers stood dejectedly in the tangled harness and licked the wounds ripped by each other's fangs.

The tight-blush harness cut into necks and ribs, as the three dispirited dogs sought vainly to string the outfit onto the trail. Suddenly the Malemutes ceased their struggles, and stood rigid, with ears cocked.

The first blush of dawn grayed the high-flung peaks, and from a far, timbered ridge came a long-drawn howl—a howl that was immediately taken up

by the hell-born chorus of the hunt pack. Instinctively the three dogs huddled, quivering, together, and, throwing back upon his haunches, the leader raised his pointed muzzle to the dawning day and gave voice to the bell-like cry that is the terror call of the dog kind.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE BED ROCK.

It was the second day after Burke's departure. Early darkness descended upon the little camp of Sundown on the rim of the arctic circle. In Bill Weed's Bed Rock Saloon the chair warmers sat about the stove and smoked and spat and lied. The croupier lazily spun the idle wheel, arranged his rack of chips, and wiped imaginary dust from the painted table with a bit of cloth. The diggers of gold had not yet begun to drift in for their evening's amusement. A desultory game of stud was in progress, the players being men whose claims had petered out, but who had not yet been forced to join the ranks of the chair warmers. The faro table was deserted, and Bill Weed, with the inevitable black cigar protruding from the extreme corner of his mouth, stood talking idly with his bartender.

The door opened slowly, hesitatingly, and a figure stepped into the room. Bill Weed stared for a moment, ceased abruptly his conversation, rolled the cigar into the opposite corner of his mouth, and, passing around the end of the bar, stepped quickly toward the figure that stood uncertainly just inside the door. Lowering his voice, he spoke in tones not unkindly:

"You're in the wrong pew, miss. Women don't come to the Bed Rock. I don't stand fer it."

The figure shrank against the door. "I did not come because I wanted to. I must see Mr. Burke."

Something in the voice caused the man to regard her more closely. But she kept her face in the shadow.

"Burke ain't here," he answered. "So trot along like a good girl. This ain't no woman's hang-out."

"Can't I—won't he be in later?"

"Well, not till quite some later. He's hit fer the Lillimuit."

The woman's hand fumbled for the latch. "Clay told me he'd gone," she answered dully, "but I did not believe him. Is *he* here?"

"I don't know any one name of Clay," answered Weed.

"Clay Hibbing. Surely you know him."

"Oh, yes, I know Hibbing all right. Well, he ain't here, neither. He won't show up till later. Probably you'll find him down to Jake Bauer's Trivoli, dancin'."

"So that's where he spends his time, is it? I thought *this* was bad enough, but he—he never even mentioned the Trivoli."

"Well, you can't blame him none for that—'tain't fit to." Again the man peered into the face framed by the small parka hood. "Might you be Hibbing's wife, ma'am?" he asked respectfully. "I've heard you spoke of."

"Yes," answered the woman, with a swift glance toward the other occupants of the room. Noticing the glance, the man reassured her:

"They ain't nobody listenin', ma'am. In the Bed Rock no one never hears what's said to me. If you got anything to say, go ahead."

The woman hesitated, her eyes searching his face. "Are you Bill Weed?" she asked abruptly.

"That's me," answered the man.

"I have heard you are square," she said, with seeming irrelevance.

Bill Weed met the gaze, unflinching. "Help yourself," he said. "It's your guess."

After a short pause she continued: "I know that Clay keeps his money in your safe. Did he put some more in just before Burke left?"

Bill Weed chewed his cigar. "I don't like to disoblige you, ma'am," he said, "but hornin' in on fambly affairs ain't deuce high with me. Mebbe you'd better ask him."

The woman made a gesture of impatience. "Clay said you were a friend of Burke's."

"I be. An' that's puttin' it mild."

"Then listen to me! What I am going to tell you is for Burke's good. Clay Hibbing is a swindler—a born crook. He found out Burke had some money and he determined to get it. The plan was to induce him to invest it with Clay—to speculate on a mining proposition."

As Kit talked she was aware that Bill Weed's eyes were fixed upon her face in a look of keen penetration, as if to seek behind the words for a hidden motive.

"Oh, I was a party to the scheme!" she flung out bitterly. "And that is the reason I am here. I am not trying to excuse myself. When I married Clay Hibbing I didn't know what a swindler looked like—outside of a book. But it was not long until I was one myself. He made me help him land his suckers, but I never got any of the money. I am just his wife. Since we have been in Sundown I have been doing a lot of thinking. There are a good many men looking for him in the North—and no one knows it better than he. He may have to make a quick get-away. And then where will I be? When that time comes he will never give me so much as a thought. So I told him that from now on I must have my half. He agreed to that—agreed too readily. Then he brought Burke up to the cabin and we got him to promise to put up fourteen thousand dollars. He was to turn the money over to Clay the next morning. I think he did turn it over, but Clay insisted that he did not. Said he promised to bring it to the cabin the following evening. And then he told me that Burke had changed his mind and gone across the divide."

Bill Weed rolled his cigar. "Why don't you go to the Mounted?" he asked.

"What good would that do? I'm his wife. I can't testify against him. And the Mounted can't act without a complaint. I don't know that I want him arrested, anyway. If Burke paid him that money, he has it where I will never see any of it. I suppose it is mostly revenge that brings me here,"

she continued bitterly, "but not all. The fact is, I took a liking to Burke the minute I saw him—he's so—so wholesome and clean, and he is square, too. Maybe you think I'm a fool, but some way meeting him set me to thinking. The men I used to know were like that—the best of them. Oh, I can't explain it, but you could understand if you had been forced for a year and a half to live the life of a jackal of society."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Weed simply. "I git you."

Once more the woman's hand sought the latch of the door. "If Clay has that money, you know it; I don't. But I don't want Burke to lose it. Can't you keep it, and give it back to him?"

Bill Weed's teeth bit hard upon his black cigar. "I kin," he answered. "An' meantime, if anythin' turns up—I mean, if Hibbing should pull out, an' you need anythin'—advice or meat an' potatoes—I'll take it kind if y'd let me know." The man's eyes looked squarely into hers. "An' there ain't no strings on that, neither." A grateful look flashed into the woman's eyes, and the next moment she was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LADY OF THE SNOWS.

Besides a little fire upon the timbered bank of a river, a man and a woman sat upon bearskin robes, ate bannock and bacon, and drank scalding tea. The man was large and bearded to the eyes with a beard that, despite his sixty-odd years, showed blue black, like the wing of a crow. The high, thin nose was weather-seared to the color of old leather. The small, steel-gray eyes blazed from their deep sockets with hawklike, rather fierce, expression. There was no ferocity, however, in the glance with which the man regarded the young woman at his side, who raised half-questioning eyes to his as a wild ululation was caught up and followed immediately by such a horrible medley of wolf cries as to cause the girl, who had spent the whole twenty years of her life in the land of the deep snows,

to look askance into the face of her father.

"'Tis the hunger cry of the hunt pack. A gaunt year, this, and no year for weaklings. 'Tis a year for the stiffening of the breed."

"Have the wolves come upon the flank of the herd?"

The man was about to reply when, from the westward, another sound clove the frosty air—a quavering, dismal sound that belled loud, and trailed off into a long-drawn howl of despair.

"A dog!" cried the girl, leaping to her feet.

"And in sore distress," added the man, as he reached for the rackets which had been stuck endwise into the snow. "Stay you by the camp. Make ready the blankets and keep up the fire. It was not far, that sound. If I mistake not, some one has met with misfortune at the foot of the Sundown Trail."

"Do you think it could be——"

The man's eyes hardened. "No, no! Hibbing knows what awaits him should he again cross the mountains! But if he dares cross, it will be by the short cut to the northward." And the next moment old Gaston Chaudiare plunged into the timber. An hour later he returned with a three-dog team and a sled which bore the unconscious form of a man and the remnants of a trail pack.

"A chechahco!" exclaimed Chaudiare. "He left his pack open to the dogs while he blundered on with his ax to pitch headlong over the edge of a twenty-foot cut bank. It was lucky for him the creek ice and the rocks below were covered by a ten-foot drift of snow. As it is, I'm thinking he's got no great hurt from his fall, and if his feet are not frozen he will be well as ever when we get a draft of hot tea inside him."

While the girl brewed the tea, the man succeeded in removing Burke's frost-stiffened clothing. He placed him between warm blankets upon robes spread close by the fireside. "'Tis well for him we had ears for the cry of his dogs," said Chaudiare, as he rubbed gently with snow the white frost spots

that showed on Burke's feet and cheeks. "A few hours more, with the cold at forty below, and——"

"I wonder who he is?" breathed the girl, as she bent over the still form. "And why he ventured alone into the Lillimuit? Are you sure there was no other?"

Her father shook his head. "There was no other. His was a one-man trail. And why should he have come but for gold?" The man laughed a hard, short laugh. "Another fool has been lured from the pleasures of his kind by the call of flat gold. He has heard of Chaudiare and the flat gold beyond the divide." Again he laughed shortly. "Well, he has found Chaudiare. The flat gold he has not found, and Chaudiare has saved his life—a thing Chaudiare may live to rue—or the chechahco."

"But surely, father," objected the girl, "we need fear no man—you and I and Maung."

Chaudiare smiled grimly. "I fear no man," he said. "And now stay you here with the stranger while I locate the caribou herd, for by the sound the hunt pack was close upon them."

Dan Burke opened his eyes, and stared about him in bewilderment. Close beside him a smokeless larch fire crackled merrily. In a vague, half-dazed sort of a way he realized that he was warm. He had reached the timber! Close above him the branches of trees cut the sky line. He strove to remember how he had come there, but his brain seemed strangely numb. He could recall no detail of wood cutting or fire building or the unharnessing of dogs or the spreading of blankets. There was a dull ache in his forehead. His temples throbbed. And try as he would, his brain could conjure only the recollection of endless white miles and dazzling snow peaks and barren, green-hued crags. He remembered shooting some dogs—remembered that he had been too cold to sleep, and that he had pushed endlessly onward, following the course of an interminable white snow valley. He turned for a better view of the fire, and every muscle of his body

protested against the movement with its own particular twinge of pain. The long, white snow trail was taking its muscle toll with a vengeance.

Suddenly he became aware that he was not alone. Some one was bending over him, and he glanced upward into the eyes of a girl! They were dark eyes—large and soft and dark. Burke noticed, too, a pair of very red lips, and that the girl's face, brown with the weather tan, was set off richly by the snow-white trimming of ermine that edged the oval of her parka hood. With an effort he worked his hand from beneath the blanket and passed it slowly across his eyes, and, a moment later, when he opened them, the face was still there. The idea occurred to him that he couldn't lie forever staring stupidly up into the face of this Lady of the Snows. His lips framed words, but his swollen tongue mauled them clumsily so that the sound was unintelligible. But the lady seemed to understand. The red lips smiled reassuringly, and Burke was conscious of a flash of white teeth. Then the sound of a voice was in his ears. A low, musical voice it was, and with the words came the realization that the lady was real.

"You are all right now," she was saying. "You will be better soon. We heard your dog howl, and my father went and found you. You met with an accident on the trail."

"An accident on the trail!" He could remember no accident, though he drove his numbed brain fiercely. Again he tried to speak, and once more his tongue mumbled thick sounds that were not words. The face disappeared, and the next moment an arm passed gently beneath his head, raising it from the blankets, and a slender, brown hand held a steaming cup to his lips. Burke flinched at the scalding touch of the hot, black tea, and the hand withdrew the cup, and, setting it upon the robe, dropped a small lump of ice into the scalding liquid.

"Your mouth is sore," said the voice. "You've eaten snow. That is very bad. The dogs can eat snow, but when men

eat it they first become very sick and then they die."

Burke's numbed brain was clearing, and he managed to smile. It was a clumsy effort, and he winced slightly at the sting of his cracked lips. Once more the slender, brown hand held the cup, and he drained it greedily to the last drop.

"But you will not die," added the voice, and Burke was aware that the dark eyes were regarding him critically, "because my father found you in time. Only those die who eat the snow until—until they die."

Again Burke smiled, and the pain of the cracked lips was less acute. The girl answered, with a low ripple of laughter:

"I said that not rightly. I mean, the men who eat snow, and keep on eating snow, so that their tongues swell up and their lips split open, and still they eat more snow, until at last the tongue becomes so big the mouth is too little to hold it, and it sticks out between the teeth and turns black with the cold, and they fall down in the snow—those are the men who die. I have seen dead men like that. They died from eating snow. Father and I found one last winter in the black spruce swamp—beside Little Otter, it was. He had lost his outfit, and for very many days had eaten no food. He kept on going until there was no flesh upon his bones, only skin. We think he was a strong man, and no *chechahco*, and that he ate snow because he had lost his outfit and could not build a fire. He was not good to look at, and we put him in a tree so the wolves could not get him.

"He must have been a big man once, but he was so light from hunger that my father and I easily lifted him into the branches of the tree, and in the spring we buried him. And the other man that I saw was a man that Maung dragged in.

"Maung is the idiot, and he is very ugly and twisted. But he is very strong, and can run swiftly with his hands in the snow like a dog, but also he can stand up and walk like a man. And

his face is big and flat and very ugly, and he has hardly any brain at all, and even that is twisted and warped like his body. But he is very cunning at times, and at other times he knows nothing. Men do not like Maung, and they chase him away, but it is not his fault he is an idiot. He does not want to be an idiot. My father found him many years ago, and brought him home because he would have died in the woods. My father says that idiots are God's children like other people. At first many years ago, when men laughed at him, my father would get very angry and beat them. And once, a long time ago, he knocked two men's heads together and chased them away because they teased Maung. It was Maung who first brought home the pieces of flat gold, and he showed my father where he found them. And now when men laugh because he is good to Maung, my father does not get angry. He only smiles.

"But I forgot—I was telling you about that other man who died from eating snow. There is not much to tell," she said, smiling. "He was very much like the other, and we put him in a tree also back of the cabin. The wolves had gnawed him when Maung found him, and in the spring we buried him, too. Those are the two men I have seen who died from eating snow."

Burke shuddered and stared in wonder into the face of the girl, whose every feature bespoke the innate refinement of a sensitive nature. There had been nothing of hardness or callousness in her words. She had spoken as one would speak of rocks or trees—had even smiled as she spoke of the horrors of the frozen dead and of Maung, the idiot, who could walk like a beast or a man. Burke swallowed a cup of broth, which, like the tea, was held to his lips by the slender, brown hand while the girl's arm supported his head. A dozen questions flashed into his mind, but when he tried to voice them his swollen tongue could only mumble unintelligible sounds.

The girl lowered his head to the blanket. "I am Aline Chaudiare, and

when you are better you must tell me your name and why you crossed the mountains. But you must sleep now. The broth and the tea will make you strong."

Burke needed no urging, for a heavy drowsiness was upon him. Although he wanted to think, and strove mightily to remain awake, the strain of the sleepless nights and the forced trail proved too much for him, and he slipped into the oblivion of a deep slumber.

It was late when Gaston Chaudiare returned to the little camp in the timber, after having located the caribou herd which had left the barren grounds and sought shelter from the extreme cold among the frozen muskegs and rolling hills of the timber country.

"They will work farther into the hills this winter than last," he said, "but the herd is larger. It must number nearly forty thousand, and the wolves are uncommon plenty, for more than two hundred fang-torn carcasses tell the tale of the stragglers and weaklings." After a pause the old man continued: "We must carry the man to Chaudiare House. 'Tis a good forty miles, and the trip will require two days. For with but the three dogs, I shall have a deal work in the harness myself." He lighted his pipe, and smoked in silence while the girl prepared the evening meal. With a nod toward Burke, who slept heavily beyond the fire, he asked: "Has he awakened yet?"

"Yes," answered the girl. "And he is a man of blue eyes—eyes that look straight at you, and do not dart glances from side to side as though there were something he feared or expected, and for which he must ever be watching. Such were the eyes of Monsieur Hibbing—shifting, crafty eyes. But the eyes of the chechabco are good."

Chaudiare regarded the girl intently as she continued, oblivious to his scrutiny: "He cannot talk because he has eaten snow, but he drank tea and broth. And I told him of the men who had eaten snow and died."

"You should have a slow tongue with

strangers, my daughter," said Chaudiare gravely. "Did you tell him more?"

"Only of Maung."

"But of the gold? Did you say aught of the gold?"

The girl shook her head. "No, only that Maung showed where the flat gold was to be found."

Chaudiare frowned. "You should not have mentioned the gold. You know naught of this man."

The girl interrupted him, her eyes glowing brightly: "Oh, yes, father, but I do know he is good. In his eyes I have seen it. If the chechahco has come for gold, he will win his gold fairly. He will not seek to spy upon us and take for himself the gold that is ours. He will find his own gold. In his eyes I have seen it."

The man laughed. "Whence all this wisdom, my daughter? You are but a girl. You have known but few men, and yet you proclaim in all boldness and sincerity that you have read this man's heart in his eyes. That is a dangerous assertion. For since the beginning of history it is a thing which has set to naught the wisdom of the wisest among women and men. And upon the failure of men and women to read aright hangs most of this world's misery."

Again the girl interrupted him: "Yes, but upon the ability to read aright hangs *all* the world's happiness!"

"You are my little philosopher," laughed the man. "I see it is not in vain you have pored over my books. In theory you have the wisdom of the philosophers at your tongue's end, but in practice, which is the daily round of experience, you are still but a child."

"But I am not a child," she answered gravely; "I am a woman. I am twenty years old. The philosophers that have written your books were men. They needed to live and to learn by experience that which women know, and have known, from the beginning of things."

The old man smiled thoughtfully, knocked his pipe against the end of a brand of firewood, and lapsed into his accustomed silence.

CHAPTER XII.

AT CHAUDIARE HOUSE.

In the shelter of a spruce thicket on the shore of Barrier Lake, a small body of water which nestled far from the beaten paths of men among the timbered foothills of the great continental divide, Gaston Chaudiare had erected his house of logs. It was a rather imposing structure of thick walls and a floor of pit-sawed lumber.

Why Chaudiare had chosen Barrier Lake as a place of residence no man knew. In fact, men knew nothing at all about Chaudiare, except that years ago he had appeared suddenly in the hill country, accompanied by his Indian wife, his little daughter, Aline, a child then of some four or five years, and several heavily freighted canoes manned by Indians from far beyond the Mackenzie. It was whispered in the hills that one three-ton freight canoe had contained nothing but books, and that it was laden to capacity. Upon Barrier Lake, which is the headwater of a tributary to a river that flows to the northward, the outfit disembarked. After building the house the Indians returned to the land from whence they had come, leaving Chaudiare, the Indian woman, and the little child as sole inhabitants of Barrier Lake. Ten years later the Indian woman died.

There was also Maung, the idiot, whom men instinctively hated and of whom they knew less even than they did of Chaudiare, who kept his own counsel. These facts men knew. Also that Chaudiare had filed no claim, but that he spent gold freely. And that among the Indians he was regarded with awe not unmingled with fear.

It was to Chaudiare House that father and daughter brought Burke, after two days of wearisome snow trail. The warmth of the dry robes and blankets, together with the nourishing broth and the hot tea, had done much to restore him to something of his normal self. It was night when the outfit reached Chaudiare House to find a dozen skin lodges pitched before the door. And as the little procession

emerged from the timber into the starlit clearing the Indians crowded from the tepees. The old man paused to speak a few short sentences of monosyllabic guttural, while the girl, with scarcely a glance at the natives, passed on into the house. When Burke and Chaudiere followed a few minutes later a fire was roaring in the fireplace of the great living room, and sounds from the kitchen indicated that Aline was busy in the preparation of supper.

The meal was even more silent than the meals which had preceded it, for the girl seemed to have relapsed into the taciturnity that was habitual with her father, and Burke listened in vain for the quaint observations and cheery bits of conversation with which she had enlivened the brief halts on the trail.

The room assigned to Burke was directly off the living room, and immediately after supper he sought his bunk. When next he opened his eyes, the objects of the little room were distinctly visible, and a glance at the frost-coated panes of the window showed that it was broad daylight. Dressing hurriedly, he stepped into the living room and crossed to the huge fireplace, before which Aline sat reading.

The girl laid aside her book and arose with a word of greeting: "You have slept long, Monsieur—" She hesitated, and broke into a rippling laugh. "You see, I can say only *monsieur*. I do not know your name."

"My name is Burke," he smiled. "Dan Burke." And was relieved to find that he was able to speak distinctly and with only a slight effort.

"Monsieur Burke," she repeated. "That is a good name. But come, you must eat, and then we shall talk."

The heavily frosted windows illuminated the raftered room dimly, and a slight sound caused Burke to peer into a far corner.

"That is Maung," said the girl, following his glance. "Come, you shall see him, and then we will eat." She crossed to the corner, closely followed by Burke, who saw, squatting upon a huge white bearskin, the most unlovely and repulsive figure he had ever laid

eyes upon. Aline had in nowise done justice to the idiot's horrible appearance, thought Burke, as he looked into the wide, flat, chinless face surrounded by a mop of coarse, manelike hair that fell in a tangled mass upon a pair of thick shoulders. Below a high, out-bulging forehead a pair of round, protruding eyes, set a hand's breadth apart, lashless and browless, stared vacuously into his own. Of a nose there was no trace save a pair of wide-flaring nostrils set low in the face which terminated in a broad, misshapen, loose-lipped mouth of tremendous proportion. From the mane, on either side of the head, protruded an enormous ear, so thin as to be almost transparent. As Burke stared, the gaze of the vacuous eyes wavered and dropped to the bearskin robe, where the long, clawlike fingers groped aimlessly at a pile of small black disks.

"See, Maung," cried the girl, "this is Monsieur Burke! He has come to make us a visit." The wide-set eyes rolled upward and rested upon the faces of the two. The loose lips grinned, while deep down in the throat sounded a gurgle of horrible laughter, and again the eyes dropped to the bearskin robe and the clawlike fingers pawed at the flat disks.

"See," whispered Aline, "he is hiding the gold. He always does that when a stranger is here." But instead of hiding it, the fingers separated it into two piles, and, accompanied by another gurgle of laughter, closed about one of the piles, and the powerful arm extended toward Burke. Aline cried out in surprise. "Why, see, he is giving you half his gold! He has never done that before! Always he fears strangers and hates them. But you he does not fear, and he is giving you his gold!"

"But I don't want his gold," objected Burke.

"Oh, but you must take it!" cried the girl. "Then he will know that you are his friend. The gold is no good to him, and he can get more. He does not know the value of gold. He does not know what it is for. It holds, for him, a strange fascination. Always he

fondles it and plays with it. It was he who showed my father the mine."

Burke held out his hand, and it was with an effort that he avoided recoiling from the touch of the clawlike fingers. The idiot laughed, and, leaping to his feet, glided swiftly to the door, with the remaining gold tight-clutched against his breast. And Burke saw that the gigantic head and shoulders were supported upon a slender, ill-developed body.

As Aline led the way to the kitchen, which served also as a dining room, Burke noticed for the first time another occupant of the room—a leather-faced old squaw, whose lynxlike eyes regarded him with stolid indifference from her chair, drawn close into the angle of the huge chimney. Ignoring the Indian completely, the girl passed into the kitchen, and not until Burke had taken his place at the table did she speak:

"That old woman is Tete. My father has told her to stay here until he comes back."

"Comes back?" asked Burke in surprise. "Has he gone away?"

"Oh, yes, before daylight they left—my father and the Indians. Twice each year, when the great caribou herd passes this way, they go to the hunt. My father and I were locating the herd when we found you. My father is chief of the hunt, and the Indians were waiting his return."

"But how long will he be gone?"

The girl smiled. "One cannot tell. Sometimes, if the new snow comes deep so that the herd must travel very slowly, in a week or ten days they are back. And sometimes, when the crust is hard and the hunt pack presses close upon their trail, the caribou travel far, and it is a month before the hunters return."

"But surely all the Indians did not go. There were many women among them?"

"Yes, the women go, too. The men kill the caribou, and the women follow behind and skin them and cut up the meat. Always it is the women who do the work. I do not like Indians!"

Burke detected a note of bitterness in her voice. "I hate them! They are dirty and lazy and stupid! And I hate them! I told my father I did not want old Tete to stay here. Always I have stayed alone before. I have not been afraid, and this time you are here also. And it is silly to have Tete, for she is fat and dirty, and I do not like her. My father said that because you were here she must stay. I told him you did not want old Tete. I am sure you do not like fat and greasy squaws. But he would not listen, and now she must stay, for my father would be very angry if we should chase her away. But it would have been much nicer with just you and me and Maung, would it not?" The soft, dark eyes were regarding Burke questioningly, and for a moment he was at loss for a reply. "Tell me," asked the girl, as a look of perplexity crept into her eyes, "you do not like fat old squaws who are lazy and dirty, do you?"

Burke laughed. "No, I can't say I do. You see, I have not known any Indians. I think I should dislike them very much. But your father was right. It is better that Tete should remain."

Aline's brows drew together in a little frown of perplexity. "Men are funny," she said. "Sometimes one does not understand them."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BARRIER.

During the days that followed, Burke and Aline Chaudiere were almost constantly together. The few short hours of arctic daylight were spent in scouring the wooded hills and ravines for rabbits and ptarmigan, with which the table was kept bountifully supplied. On two occasions they had been able to bring down a deer, and several prowling wolves fell to the crack of their guns. The girl early demonstrated her superiority in the use of the rifle—a fact she herself would never admit, being always ready with an excuse for his misses, and equally ready to ascribe her own success to a "lucky shot."

Fishing through the ice, and skiing

on the steep hillsides served occasionally to vary the monotony of the hunt. Much as he enjoyed the out-of-door sports, it was the long evenings by the fireside that Burke looked forward to with the keenest anticipation. Well-filled bookcases lined the walls of the great living room, and it was in the perusal of old and handsomely bound volumes that he found a partial answer to the perplexing riddle of the girl.

One day when household duties claimed Aline's attention, he went hunting alone, and promptly realized that hunting had lost its zest. The discovery came as a surprise, and, seating himself upon the trunk of a fallen tree, he thought long and seriously. Then shouldering his rifle, he returned to the house empty-handed to spend the remainder of the day reading aloud, while the girl busied herself with her sewing.

In the novels of other years, which, during the long evenings, they read by turns, Burke easily traced the quaint little oddities of the girl's speech and expression. As this girl was like no woman he had ever known, so was their companionship unlike any companionship he had ever known. He would sit by the hour studying her profile through half-closed lids as she read aloud from a book of her own selection. Again, he would talk with her by the hour, or by the hour lapse into silence. It was all the same, and Burke came to realize that for him contentment meant only the presence of Aline Chaudiare. Little by little, as imperceptibly as a flower develops, the girl unfolded herself to him. And yet he realized that in the soul of this woman of the snow wastes existed depths he had never plumbed.

Seated in Chaudiare's big chair before the blazing logs, he would ponder long of nights after the girl had retired. Who was she? Not that any one who had seen the two together could have for an instant doubted that she was the daughter of the strange, silent man whom men called Chaudiare. But who was Chaudiare? Why was he a strange, silent man? Why had

he elected to live and to bring up this girl who, Burke swore by all his gods, was the most beautiful, the most lovable, and the one altogether desirable woman he had ever known, in the midst of the wilderness on the frozen rim of the arctic? A man whose taste would naturally incline to such a life Burke could hardly imagine to be the man to transport, at the expenditure of much time and labor, de-luxe editions nearly two thousand miles beyond the railroad.

If the girl knew, she kept her own council. Nor did she ever explain her repugnance and hatred for Indians—a hatred that was directed against no individual or tribe, but was an inborn aversion, deep and abiding, that she held impartially toward the whole race.

One evening as they sat before the fire, the girl broke a long silence that had fallen upon them. She spoke abruptly and with startling directness: "You are a white man. Would you marry an Indian?"

Burke removed the pipe from his mouth, and pretended to consider. "Well," he replied, with mock seriousness, "if old Tete is a fair sample, I think I may say positively that I would not."

The girl seemed annoyed at his bantering tone. "But *any* Indian," she persisted, and he saw that she was in earnest. "Even if she were pretty and good and clean and not lazy?"

"No," he answered, "I certainly would not!"

"Not even a half-breed?"

"No. Not even a half-breed."

"But suppose you were to marry a half-breed without knowing her to be a half-breed, and afterward you were to find out the truth? What would you do then?"

"I think," answered Burke gravely, "that I would stick by my bargain."

"But always you would remember that she had deceived you."

Burke nodded: "Yes, I would always remember."

"But," continued Aline, "suppose you loved a girl very, very much and did not know that she was a half-breed, and when you asked her to marry you

she told you she was a half-breed, then would you marry her?"

"Aren't you presenting rather an impossible hypothesis?" laughed Burke.

The girl shook her head vehemently. "No, I am not. That is, I do not think I am. But let us suppose that it is entirely possible."

He saw that she was intensely in earnest—that she leaned forward, eager for his reply. "No," he answered, "I think I would not marry her. The question is one that would concern most deeply, not me, but my children. I think the children of white men have the right to be born white. And even quarter-breeds are reckoned as Indians."

"Yes," said the girl, after a moment of silence, "you are right. Always it is the children who must pay."

Burke wondered at the toneless quality of her usually rich voice. "You are tired," he said. "It is late. You should be in bed."

"Yes," she answered, rising slowly from her chair, "it is late, and I am very tired."

It was the first time he had ever heard her admit that she was tired. He regarded her questioningly as she stood watching the flames flow smoothly upward into the black throat of the stone chimney, and was surprised to note that her shoulders drooped and that the very expression of her face bespoke utter weariness. One hand rested listlessly upon the back of her chair, and her whole being seemed to have lost the splendid vitality—the verve that was her very self.

Burke rose, and stood close beside her, and as the brown eyes raised to his he read in their soft depths a look of infinite pain. Something deep within him burst invisible bonds, and through his veins surged unrestrained the passion of a mighty love. His brain reeled. There was a wild, glad singing in his heart, and his great frame trembled at the nearness of her. For days he had known of this all-compelling love; had fought against it; had held it in check. He would enter no man's home during his absence and rob it of

its dearest treasure. With Chaudiare's return, he would first ask, and, if the old man refused, would then demand that which was his of right. For deep in his heart Burke knew that the call of his great love had awakened an answering love in the heart of this girl of the arctic snows—and the right of love is the first right of man!

Only a moment he stood, gazing into the eyes of the girl. What was it men had said—the men back there in Sundown—that beyond the divide was the land of dead men. That he would find only death and the horrors of the frozen unknown. And, instead, he had found that which in all his wanderings among the haunts of men he had never known—the mighty passion of a great love, which is life—life—life! He laughed aloud, caught the girl into his arms.

"I love you!" he whispered softly. "You are mine—mine! Before worlds were, our love began. Tell me—tell me, dear, that you love me—that you will be my wife!" He could feel her yielding body tremble at the words, and then a thick, heavy-fingered hand was on his arm, and upon his ears fell unintelligible sounds of harsh mouth-ing. Old Tete had lumbered heavily from her seat in the chimney corner, and Burke looked up swiftly to meet the glare of the lynxlike eyes. At the sound of the voice he felt the pliant muscles of the girl in his arms spring suddenly tense as drawn wire, her shoulders stiffened with a jerk, and she raised her face from its resting place against the bosom of his coarse mining shirt. He saw that her cheeks showed white with the pallor of death beneath the tan. And that, from the brown eyes, which a moment before had glowed softly with deep pain, blazed the wrath of a primordial soul hate.

A wild scream pierced the air. At the same instant the girl hurled herself upon the Indian woman with a movement as swift as a flash of light. Followed a frightened grunt from the lips of the throttled squaw, and the thick-bodied Tete lay stretched upon her back, with her head almost in the

flames of the fireplace, while, with one knee upon the prostrate chest, Aline Chaudiere crouched above her, the girl's white-brown fingers sunk like talons into the flesh of the thick, dark throat. The very suddenness of the unexpected attack took Burke completely by surprise. For an instant he stared, bewildered, upon the struggling forms, and, stooping swiftly, grasped the girl's arm. "Aline!" "Aline!" he cried, but she paid him no heed, and with difficulty he tore her fingers from the red throat. He raised her gently, and old Tete, muttering, gurgling, scrambled slowly to her feet. Aline, white and trembling, drew away from him, her eyes still fixed upon the squaw. Before the door of her room she paused and pointed a trembling finger at the old woman. Under the strain of the nervous tension her voice rose almost to a shriek.

"Always—always it is you!" she cried. "Your people! Always it is the Indians! For me there can be no happiness! Oh, if I could only die! If I had never been born! I hate you—I hate your people!"

Burke, astounded at the outburst, stepped quickly toward her. "Aline—Aline, girl!" he repeated soothingly. But the girl waved him back.

"No! No! No!" she cried. "Do not come near me! I can never marry you! I love you! I love you!" The words ended in a dry, choking sob. She reached for the latch, and passed, lightly as a shadow, from the room. The door banged loudly behind her, and Burke, standing wide-eyed in the mel-low lamplight, heard the dropping of a heavy bar.

CHAPTER XIV.

THAT MAN HIBBING.

Days followed during which Burke hunted alone; rather, he tramped alone the hills and valleys made familiar by his hunting trips with Aline. He carried his rifle from force of habit, but stupid indeed was the game that fell to it. Gradually the radius of his excursions lengthened to embrace more dis-

tant hills and valleys. He started early and returned late, and always to find a hot meal awaiting him—a meal, in the preparation of which he knew the fat old squaw had had no part. Each night he sat long before the open fireplace, thinking, wondering, hoping that the girl would come to him there. But she did not come.

Among the hills his restlessness of spirit drove his muscles mercilessly. And in the great living room he sought in vain to center his attention upon his book. Volume after volume was tossed aside in disgust, and, body weary and unutterably lonely, his thoughts would return to the girl—his strange Lady of the Snows. With her own lips she had told him she could never marry him, and in the same breath had passionately declared her love for him! The sound of those last words still rang in his ears, and in the wonder of them he repeated over and over again that nothing else could matter. But if she loved him, why could she not marry him? And why did she remain aloof from him?

The days of solitary tramping amid the silence of the land of frozen things, and the long nights in the solitude of the great living room, were days and nights that stamped the mark of their passing indelibly upon Dan Burke. No longer was he the irresponsible—the happy-go-lucky—the aimless. Into his life had come suddenly a purpose. He would beat down invisible barriers, fancied or real he did not know—nor did he care. Would win, if necessary in defiance of herself, his Lady of the Snows. And, having won, would smash obstacles and wrest their substance from the frozen North.

Then one morning, as he was about to start upon his daily pilgrimage, she came to him. "I am going with you, Dan," she said in a low voice. And he waited in silence while she stooped to fasten the thongs of her rackets by the thin, white light of the glittering stars. It was the first time she had called him Dan, and Burke, glancing eagerly into her face as she straightened up, saw that the days that had

elapsed since he had last seen her had been days of suffering. The intense animation which had been so much a part of her had given place to an air of subdued reserve, so that she seemed a much older, more mature Aline as she swung into stride beside him upon the steep path that slanted to the surface of the lake.

"Which way?" she asked, with a pitiful attempt at the old lightness of speech, as they faced the broad expanse of white.

"Do you feel able to cross the bay and circle around by the rock valley?"

"Of course I feel able!" she answered quickly, with a shadow of her rippling laughter. "Why shouldn't I feel able? And since when have you conceived the idea that you could outwalk me? Come, lead the way, and before night I shall show you that you are still a chechahco while I am to the rackets born."

Realizing the girl's brave attempt to appear her old self, Burke laughingly struck out across the mouth of the deep bay. All morning they tramped the white beaver meadows and low, wooded hills, pausing now and then for a shot at a rabbit or ptarmigan, or to conjure up a hollow echo of the light-hearted raillery and banter which had enlivened former excursions. At noon they camped for lunch where the overhang of a rock wall formed a wide-mouthed, shallow cave whose entrance was sheltered from the bitter winds by a thick growth of scrub. While Burke gathered firewood Aline reclined wearily against the hard wall and stared into the pile of dead ashes that were the remains of other camp fires. For this spot had been a favorite lunching place in their long tramps together.

"Dead ashes," muttered the girl, "and little, charred ends that are the memories of a few short days of happiness."

The scrub parted, Burke tossed an armful of dry branches onto the stone floor, and presently a fire was crackling merrily upon the little pile of dead ashes.

Luncheon was a silent affair—a trying ordeal for both. For, despite the

forced banter and the pitiful attempts at gayety of the long morning hours, each knew that the other had not been deceived, and that the pitiful attempts at the old comradeship had ended in miserable failure.

Burke was the first to speak. Aline had been expecting it—knew that it had to come. She did not seek to prevent it. Her eyes met his bravely, yet with a certain dread. She swallowed nervously, and by the tightening of her lips Burke could see that she was steeling herself to meet his words.

"Aline—dear," he began, haltingly at first, as if at loss for words. "Tell me what it is. Why have you kept away from me? You *do* love me! In your eyes I have read it. And with your own lips you have told me. Why did you say you can never be my wife?" He moved to take her hand, but the girl drew away, pressing closer against the rock wall of the cave.

"I do love you," she said in a dull voice, her eyes meeting his squarely. "Ah, that is the pain of it—the thought that I can never be your wife."

"But why?" urged the man. "What absurd notion is this? Surely I have the right to know."

She shook her head. "I cannot tell you," she faltered. "It is not an absurd notion. It is a real barrier—an ugly, grisly barrier that is irrevocably raised between us."

The man winced at the pain in the dark eyes. The next moment the girl found herself struggling in his arms, while his voice, vibrant with passion, sounded in her ear: "There is no barrier! Before a love like ours no barrier can exist! I will fight it—crush it—tear it, and trample it into the earth! You are mine, and I will have you! Mine—do you hear?"

She struggled feebly in his grasp. "No! No! No!" she moaned. "The barrier is real. It is stronger than we are strong—stronger, even, than our love!"

A slight sound at the mouth of the cave caused Burke to reach quickly for his rifle. The scrub parted, and Maung, the idiot, glided noiselessly into the cav-

ern and squatted, maundering, beside the fire, where he chuckled and babbled foolishly as he fondled his flakes of flat gold. Burke tendered him the remains of the luncheon, but the idiot brushed the food away with a sweep of his long hand, and, catching up his gold, waddled clumsily to Burke's side, where he deposited a handful of flat flakes upon the stone floor. The protruding, lashless eyes stared into the man's face, and the idiot chuckled throatily. A powerful arm was extended, and long fingers plucked at the sleeve of Burke's parka. The man regarded him quizzically, while Aline also looked upon the unusual proceeding with interest. Mumbling unintelligibly, the idiot pointed to his pile of gold, wiped his wet, flabby lips upon the back of his hand, plucked once more at Burke's sleeve, and pointed into the north. Then, gathering up his gold, he whisked it from sight, and moved to the entrance of the cave, where he squatted upon his haunches, waiting.

Aline gasped, and Burke glanced swiftly into her face. "Why, he wants to show you the mine!" she cried. "Only to my father has he showed the mine, although many have tried to wrest the secret from him."

"Much obliged, Maung," Burke laughed, with something of the old timbre in his voice. "But nothing doing!"

"Why not?" asked the girl. "Surely you crossed the divide to find gold?"

He glanced at her in surprise. "To find gold, yes. To search for it, and to gouge it out of the gravel. I came to win gold—not to steal it from the claim of another!"

"But the claim has never been filed. If you could locate the mine and file it, the law would award it to you."

"And you think I would do that?" asked the man reproachfully. "Did you not tell me why your father never filed—because the gold lies in a pocket, because he knows the adjoining ground is barren, and that if he filed the claim there would immediately follow a useless stampede—a stampede that would cost the lives of good men and which

would benefit no man? Do you suppose I would seek to take advantage of a man who daily risks the loss of his entire fortune merely to save men from death through their own folly?"

The serious brown eyes smiled. "No, Dan," Aline answered gently, "I knew you would not. I told my father the day we found you that you would touch no man's gold but your own. In your eyes I read it as you looked at me while I talked. But my father is skeptical. Many men have tried, in one way and another, to obtain our secret—the worst of them all was that man Hibbing."

"Hibbing!" cried Burke in astonishment. "Do you know Hibbing?"

"Yes, I know him," answered the girl, with a touch of bitterness in her voice. "For days he lived in our house and ate our bread, and all the time he tried in every way possible to find out the location of the mine. He tried to obtain Maung's friendship; then he bullied him. Day after day, as he thought unknown to any but himself, he trailed my father. He trailed Maung also. And, failing in that, he tried to obtain the secret from me. He made love to me, and asked me to marry him, and even as he asked his little green eyes glittered with gold lust. And then, one day while my father was out hunting, he laid hands on me." Burke listened, wide-eyed, leaning forward tensely, clasping and unclasping his hands. "He struck me and knocked me down, and his hands flew to my throat as if to choke the secret from me. And then Maung came. He came swiftly—terribly—screaming like a fiend, and he laid hold of Monsieur Hibbing and tore him from me. Maung is strong, and he shook him until I thought he would tear him in pieces, and when the breath was nearly gone from his body whirled him high above his head, and hurled him over the cliff in front of the cabin. And if Monsieur Hibbing had not lodged in the branches of a tree, he would have been dashed to pieces on the sharp rocks below. Then Maung waited at the foot of the tree, and I sat down upon the edge of the cliff, and Monsieur Hibbing was afraid to

come down, and clung among the branches, howling and begging me to take Maung away. But I would not. I sat there for hours and laughed at him. It was very funny. And at last my father came, and I thought for a moment he would kill him. But he did not, and that very night he sent him on the long traverse. And it was a miracle that Monsieur Hibbing returned to Sundown."

Burke listened to the recital with gleaming eyes. At its conclusion a deep growl escaped him.

"You know Monsieur Hibbing?" asked Aline.

"Yes, I know him—now. He thinks he knows me, but—he'll know me better when we meet again!"

CHAPTER XV.

BURKE HITS THE TRAIL.

The return to Chaudiare House was completed almost in silence. Neither Aline nor Burke made any pretense of keeping up the fiction of the forenoon.

In the clearing an Indian awaited them—an Indian who spoke rapidly in his own language to Aline. Burke noticed that as she listened her face became pale with the pallor of that night she had hurled herself upon the squaw.

"What is it?" he asked, when the man had finished.

The girl raised her eyes to his, and once more in their depths he saw the smoldering hate. "The Indians!" she whipped out savagely. "Always it is the Indians. This time they have shot my father!"

"Shot him!" cried Burke. "You mean——"

She interrupted him. "Shot him by some careless blunder in the hunt. The man says he thinks it is bad, but he is not dead. They are bringing him here."

"I'll go to him at once!" cried Burke. "There may be something I can do. I've picked up a lot of first-aid stuff. In the meantime, you may make his bunk—see that there is plenty of hot water—prepare some bandages, and get together whatever medicines you have in the house. It may not be so bad,

after all. Tell this fellow to take me to him by the shortest possible route."

The girl noted the quick authority with which he took command, and sprang to obey. A few minutes later Burke was following the guide down a long snow valley which glittered white and wide in the light of the rising moon.

The Indians who were conveying Chaudiare to his cabin on Barrier Lake had traveled but little slower than the runner who preceded them with the news. A few miles down the valley the two met the outfit which consisted of Chaudiare's own dog team, three Indians, and a light sled, upon which lay the wounded man. A hasty examination assured Burke that the wound, while serious and in need of immediate attention, was not a mortal one. A bullet from an old H. B. smoothbore had shattered the bone of his right arm midway between the elbow and the shoulder. The accident had occurred early on the previous day, and, after assuring himself that the hemorrhage had been stanchied, Burke hurried the wounded man to Chaudiare House, where Aline had already completed her preparation for his reception.

The girl worked deftly and swiftly under Burke's direction. The wound was thoroughly cleansed and the operation of setting the bone begun. This proved no easy matter, as the case was one to have taxed the skill of an experienced surgeon. The heavy, soft bullet had badly shattered the bone, slivers of which were imbedded deeply in the torn muscles. In Chaudiare House was no anæsthetic, but the old man endured in silence the torture of Burke's probing of the wound and removal of the slivers of bone. The operation consumed more than an hour, and was performed by means of a pocketknife and instruments made on the spot from pieces of snare wire. At last the ordeal was over, the arm bound in splints, and the two had the satisfaction of seeing the old man sink into a deep sleep.

That night Burke discovered that the supplies of Chaudiare House stood sadly in need of replenishment. The

fact that Chaudiare had postponed for several weeks his semiannual trip to Sundown, while he sought to locate the belated caribou herd, rendered the obtaining of these supplies a matter of serious moment. Meat they would have in plenty when the Indians arrived with the heavily loaded sleds, for the hunt had been successful. But meat alone means scurvy.

As the two sat at their midnight supper, Burke remarked that Aline drank no tea, and also that she appeared unusually grave—a condition that he attributed as much to her unhappiness as to worry over the plight of her father.

"Come, buck up!" he cried, with an attempt at his old lightness of manner. "Fill your cup to your father's speedy recovery!"

The girl smiled, and shook her head. "Please!" he insisted. "Brooding will do no good. Everything will come out right. We've done all in our power, and with his rugged constitution and iron will it will be but a matter of a few weeks until he is sound as ever. It is your duty to keep yourself fit. There's nothing like tea to soothe the shaken nerves."

Again the girl refused, and as Burke looked into her downcast face realization of the truth suddenly dawned upon him. He leaned forward.

"Aline!" he cried so sharply that the word sounded harsh. "You are not drinking tea because the supply is limited, and you are saving it for your father and for me! The provisions are running low!"

The girl raised her eyes to his. "Yes," she said quietly, "there is no use trying to conceal the fact any longer. The provisions are running low—lower than they have ever been at Chaudiare House. My father generally goes to Sundown early in December, but this year the caribou were long in coming. Indeed, we feared they would not come at all. We depend on the caribou for our meat, and we must kill them as they pass or make a journey of hundreds of miles to their winter range far to the southward. There-

fore, my father put off his trip to Sundown until after the caribou hunt. But we will not starve," she added, "for when the Indians return there will be meat for a whole year."

"Yes," answered Burke, "but how about tea and sugar and the dozen and one things which are necessary for comfort and for health? It is a long time until spring—and there is the scurvy!"

Aline shuddered, and Burke rose and poured a cup of tea. "Drink this," he said, "and after supper we will make out the list."

"The list?" asked the girl in surprise.

The man stood looking down at her. "Yes," he answered, "the list of supplies. To-morrow I hit the trail for Sundown."

"You!" cried the girl. "You make the trip to Sundown alone! You will not be able to get a guide. No Indian in the country will venture across the Lillimuit! They are afraid of it! And the white men, too, are afraid—all except my father, and he comes and goes by a shorter trail that is known to no one except himself and Monsieur Hibbing, who trailed him through. The short trail cuts two days each way from the journey."

"I guess it's the long trail for mine," laughed Burke. "I know that one. At least I came through it once."

The girl regarded him anxiously. "Yes, and what happened? If we had not found you, you would have died out there in the cold and the snow. You cannot make it! No chechahco can make it! It is a trail that turns back the sour doughs."

The girl's objections nettled Burke. "Maybe," he answered rather shortly, "but it won't turn me! I made it once, and I'll make it again. And I'll be back here with supplies in two weeks' time!"

At daylight the following morning he waved good-by to Aline, who watched from the doorway as he swung Chaudiare's dogs down the long snow valley toward the mouth of the Sundown Trail.

CHAPTER XVI.

HIBBING COMES ACROSS.

It was early evening. Bill Weed stood behind the bar of the Bed Rock and greeted the miners who entered by twos and threes in search of an evening's entertainment. The night was still and intensely cold, so that the opening of the door was accompanied by an inrush of dense fog that enveloped the newcomers and rendered them indistinguishable until they had traversed half the length of the room. A few paused before the bar to buy drinks or to chat with the proprietor, but the greater number passed on to the rear, where various games of chance awaited their edification.

Weed started leisurely around the bar. It was time to begin the game at the layout where he himself dealt faro. The door opened, and out of the fog strode a tall figure whose frost-rimmed parka hood bespoke the traveler of a long snow trail. The proprietor paused, rolling his black cigar in his mouth, as he glanced at the figure with interest. The trail to Dawson had not yet been opened, and few and intrepid were the men who had mushed it. That one should have completed the journey was evidence in itself that he was a man of parts and a sour dough. Heavy mittens dangled from the sleeves of the parka. With one bared hand the man forced back the frost-covered hood, while with the other he pinched at the icicles which clung to his mustache. When the hand dropped Weed noted that the lips were smiling.

"Hi, Bill!" greeted the trail musher quite casually. "You see, I'm back in spite of your cheerful predictions."

"Burke!" exclaimed Weed, staring into the face of the man before him. "How in——" He cased speaking, and glanced swiftly about the room.

Burke, following the glance, noted that it rested momentarily on Hibbing, who, unaware of his entrance, stood talking with a group beside the roulette wheel. A hard gleam leaped into his eyes, and, at the memory of Aline's words, his fists clenched. Bill Weed

caught the gleam and the swift clenching of fists, and stepped closer.

"Face this way," he whispered, "so he won't see you. Now, how much do you know?"

Burke looked at the man in surprise. "I know I'm right here to finish a job that was begun over yonder."

"Have you saw the missus?" asked Weed.

"The missus?" repeated Burke in a puzzled tone.

"Yes, his'n—his wife."

Burke remembered the woman with the blue eyes. "Yes, I've seen her. By the way, did she get well?"

"Well?" grunted Weed. "Guess she did if she was sick. She was in here huntin' fer you the day after you crossed the divide."

"Hunting for me! What did she want of me?"

"Better slip up to the cabin an' see."

Burke shook his head. "No, I'm in a hurry this trip."

"In a hurry?" asked Weed. "You don't mean you're goin' back over there!"

"To-morrow!" laughed Burke.

"Mebbe you know yer own business," said Weed, scrutinizing him closely. "You've changed some sence you left here—yer eyes. All the same, if you hain't saw her this trip, you'd better slip up there right now while Hibbing's busy at the wheel. He'll be here when you git back."

"But I don't want to see her," objected Burke. "I haven't time."

Bill Weed grinned. "Mebbe you think you don't," he answered enigmatically. "But you do—'bout fourteen thousan' dollars' worth!"

Burke glanced up quickly. "You mean——" he began.

"I mean," broke in the other, "that you'd better git to thunder out of here before Hibbing spots you! You kin be back in an hour."

Without a word, Burke drew on the hood of his parka and slipped unnoticed through the door. The room was well filled when he again entered the Bed Rock. Box in hand, Bill Weed noted his arrival without so much as

the flicker of an eyelash. Through the air, blue with tobacco smoke, sounded the rough voices of men, the click of the ivory ball, and the rattle of chips. Advancing to the stove, Burke paused and allowed his glance to travel slowly over the occupants of the room. There were many familiar faces. Beside the faro table Sergeant Blake idly watched the play.

Burke's entrance had passed unheeded. Now and then a man glanced toward him, but in the glance was no sign of recognition. Bill Weed's eyes were upon the cards. Burke surveyed the scene calmly. He thrust his hand into his pocket, and withdrew a pipe, which he filled from a buckskin pouch. Then he walked slowly toward the roulette table. For a moment he stood behind Hibbing, who was seated midway of the board. The man was playing, and, judging from the interest of the onlookers, the play was running high. Carefully and very deliberately he was placing his bets. Unnoticed, Burke worked his way to the end of the table and around the end, until he stood nearly facing the man who played. Twenty men watched breathlessly as Hibbing placed his chips. Twice he won, then lost, then won again.

Since Burke had taken his position, the man had not looked up. Every nerve and fiber of him seemed concentrated upon the game. Slowly, guardedly, his hand moved above the painted numbers of the board—hesitated—moved on. A croupier spun the wheel, the hand came to rest, and about the table men gasped as a tall stack of yellows covered a single number. Burke took no heed of the pile of chips. Never for an instant did his eyes leave Hibbing's face. Then, as the wheel slowed, Hibbing looked up, and his green-gray eyes met squarely the cold, level stare of the narrowed eyes of blue. Neither spoke. The wheel stopped, the little ball settled to rest, and a croupier raked toward him, unheeded, Hibbing's pile of yellow chips. But he raked them mechanically, for his attention was concentrated upon the

two men who stared into each other's faces across the painted board.

Hibbing's gaze broke. He brushed the tiny sweat beads from his forehead with fingers that men saw trembled. He pushed the chips that lay before him toward the croupier, and moistened his lips with his tongue. "Cash 'em!" he rasped, and scooped the gold into his pocket. His chair grated harshly on the silence as he rose to his feet. Play at the other tables had ceased, and men, sensing the surcharged air, crowded forward. Again Hibbing spoke. This time he addressed Burke, and the words came with nervous rapidity: "So you got back, did you?" The sentence was half a sneer. "I suppose you brought back a sledload of flat gold." Hibbing paused, but his only answer was the cold, level stare of the blue eyes. It got on his nerves—that silent, searching stare. Again the man spoke, jerking his words nervously as before: "What are you looking at? I'm here, ain't I? If you want anything out of me, come and get it."

Deliberately Burke walked around the corner of the table, until he stood facing Hibbing at the distance of an arm's reach. The man drew back as he gazed into the cold blue eyes. Something he read in their depths struck a chill of terror to his heart. The man who stood facing him in the center of the circle of blurred faces was not Burke—not the happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care chechahco of a month before. Here was a new Burke—a threatening, menacing Burke—a man cold and relentless, who had come to demand a reckoning. Other men who recognized him also sensed the change, and as they crowded close the name of Burke was passed from lip to lip.

"Yes, I've come back. I didn't bring any gold. That is, none of my own. I came for a load of grub for my friend Chaudiare, who is temporarily laid up by an accident. But more particularly, Hibbing, I came to see you."

At the mention of Chaudiare's name Hibbing started. His mouth settled

into a thin-lipped sneer. "Well, if you came to see me," he snarled, "you're sure of getting your money's worth!"

"Yes, I'll get my money's worth, Hibbing," continued Burke in the same even tone. "Beside that, I'll finish the little job that Maung began. You remember Maung, Hibbing. But before we come to that there is another little item between you and me. A little matter, I believe, of fourteen thousand dollars that you fleeced me out of."

Hibbing's laugh was a sneer. For an instant he forgot Burke's allusion to Chaudiere and the unfinished work of Maung. "You fool!" he hissed. "You poor, bleating fool! Who says I fleeced you out of fourteen thousand dollars? You brought the money to me yourself. You invested it in a mine in partnership with me. You've got the receipt for it in black and white. I put up eleven thousand of my own, and the papers are all regular. And now, you tinhorn! You piker! You want to welsh! You've got cold feet, and you want your money back!" Apparently sure of his ground, Hibbing fairly hurled the words from his lips: "The papers are right, and the deal will stand any court in the Territory!"

Men glanced, breathless, from one to the other of the two central figures. They expected a sudden onslaught, for upon the rim of the arctic a man may not be blackguarded to his face and remain a man. They waited tensely for the thud of blows, but no blow fell. The venom of Hibbing's words seemed to fall unheeded on Burke's ears. No smallest muscle flexed, and on his lips a smile played—a smile that caused those nearest him to gaze even more tensely—more expectantly: Here was no cheap barroom brawl. Something was behind that smile.

"Yes, Hibbing, the papers are regular, but there are one or two little things the papers don't show. For instance, the gold that you represented as the test panning was never taken from the claim that the papers described. The claim you bought from John Harvey you paid three hundred dollars for.

And it is as worthless as a cinder dump."

"It's a lie!" cried Hibbing. "Who told you that?"

"Never mind who told me," answered Burke. "As I said, primarily my business with you is to finish a certain job that was begun beyond the divide. If it wasn't for that, I believe I'd let you keep the money and I'd take it out of your hide. But it takes a lot of hide, Hibbing, like yours, to make fourteen thousand dollars' worth. And when the other job is finished you're not going to have much hide left." There was a taunting note in the hard voice which seemed suddenly to grow harder: "Come across!" The words were bitten short.

Hibbing's fists clenched tight, and the shifting green-gray eyes glared balefully. "It's a lie, I tell you! Who told you? Who——"

There was a movement beyond the circle of bystanders. A sudden, swift crowding, and a mutter of imprecations, as a slight, fur-clad figure pushed and wormed through the dense-packed throng and ranged itself beside Burke.

"I told him!" The words rang in a high, thin treble, and Kit stood facing Hibbing with flashing eyes. "I told him!" she repeated defiantly. "Tell me it's a lie, if you dare! Maybe I can tell a few things that might interest the community."

For just a second Hibbing remained speechless. "You——" he roared, his voice thick with rage. "You—you fool!"

"Yes," retorted the woman, "I've been a fool, and no one knows but you—and me—how big a fool I've been. But I haven't been as big a fool as you have. And now I'm through—I'm going to make what reparation I can. And then, somehow, I'm going outside!" Her voice broke, and Hibbing leaned close, his lips white with rage.

"I'll fix you for this!" he hissed, and then in a louder voice: "Weed, just bring me that envelope that I handed you a month or so ago. I—I've been double-crossed!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MAN FIGHT.

Bill Weed elbowed his way to the deserted bar, and returned a moment later with a long envelope which he handed to Hibbing, who passed it over to Burke. Breaking the seal, the younger man counted his fourteen one-thousand-dollar bills. "The change is right, Hibbing," he nodded, and paused suddenly in the act of cramming the bills into his pocket, as his glance fell upon Kit, who cringed from the glare of Hibbing's snakelike eyes. Burke's eyes strayed to Hibbing and back to the face of the woman, which showed marble white in the smoke-fogged lamplight of the room. The hand that held the bills was slowly withdrawn from the pocket. One by one he counted seven bills from the roll, and, stepping to the woman's side, pressed them into her hand. She made a motion of protest. Her fingers seemed to shrink from the touch of the crisp, new bills. Burke interrupted her as she was about to speak. The note of hardness was gone from his voice:

"Fifty-fifty, I believe you said, was what Hibbing promised you on this deal. It is yours. You have earned it. When you talked of going home, and of how you hated the North and all I fell for it. You've earned the money. Keep it!"

A moment of silence followed Burke's words—a moment during which the woman gazed at the money in her hand. And then, with a swift movement, she tossed the bills to the floor, and, turning, was swallowed up in the encircling crowd, which opened to allow her to pass.

Again Burke turned his attention to the man before him. Again his voice was low and steady and hard: "And now, Hibbing, the time has come for you to square another little deal; to pay up for the part you played over beyond the divide—for the days when you ate a man's bread and trailed him like a coyote, in hope of discovering his mine, and, when you failed in that,

tried to bully the secret out of Maung, the idiot.

"But the thing that shows you in your true colors, Hibbing, is the way you tried to win the affections of the young girl who is the daughter of the house. And, when once you failed, you lost your head. And one day when the master of the house was hunting in the far hills, and you found yourself alone with the idiot and the girl, you knocked her down, and, with your hands at her throat, sought to choke the secret from her; for *that* also you must pay."

Hibbing's face paled, and his teeth clenched as the words fell with purring softness from Burke's lips—a softness that, to the ears of the listening men of the North, conveyed a menace more terrible than a tirade of loud-bawled invective. They pressed closer, listening with breathless attention. The voice of Hibbing snarled sharply on the silence:

"And what's that to you? Who sent you here? Who gave you the right to horn in on my business?" As if emboldened by the sound of his own voice, he continued: "What I do is my own affair, and you and Chaudiare and the breed girl can go to thunder, and take the idiot with you!"

"Breed girl?" The words leaped involuntarily from Burke's lips, and in them was no hint of the velvety softness of his former speech. He took a quick step forward, and, recovering himself, stared at Hibbing in silence.

The man sneered: "Yes, breed girl! So you fell for a breed, did you? You fool!" His eyes swept the close-crowded faces of the men. "There's men right here in this room that recollect Chaudiare's Slavi wife. They used to trade at Norman on the Mackenzie."

For an instant Burke stared, while the world swam red before his eyes. Suddenly he lunged forward, and his fist shot straight for the point of Hibbing's jaw. But Hibbing had been long trained in the man fights of the gold camps, and when Burke's fist should have landed his jaw was elsewhere.

Before Burke could recover he was staggered by a blow that landed with a cutting twist. It laid his cheek open to the bone in an inch-long gash below the eye. Another blow fell, and another—blows that marred and jarred and forced him backward, the while he vainly sought to return blow for blow.

While Burke had a trifle the advantage in size, Hibbing was lightning fast. He was, moreover, wise in the methods of the rough-and-tumble fighting of the camps. Also, he was unhampered, having removed his parka earlier in the evening, while Burke's heavy garment seriously interfered with the free use of his arms. This fact, however, gave Burke one advantage. Hibbing was forced to fight high, for body blows fell harmless against the heavy moosehide parka.

Round and round they milled, Hibbing continuing to rain in blows with a ferocity that forced Burke to the defensive. With the blood streaming from the gash in his cheek, and his head throbbing with the shock of the blows that found his jaw, Burke lashed out blindly or blocked Hibbing's punches with the dogged persistence of a beaten man. As if to finish the combat in the vigor of his first rush, Hibbing never for an instant slackened his pace, striking and kicking with a malignance that threatened at any moment to beat his opponent to the floor.

With a supreme effort, Burke plunged in for a clinch, but Hibbing stepped swiftly aside, and with a deft movement swept Burke's feet from under him. Burke crashed heavily to the floor, and as he fell Hibbing's foot shot out with lightning speed, and his heavy mukluk barely grazed Burke's face. It was an old trick, and one that has abruptly terminated a thousand rough-and-tumble battles of the North—the kick that meets a man's face a foot and a half above the floor as he falls and rips it wide to the bone. But Hibbing miscalculated his distance, and, unbalanced by the force of the swing, tripped upon the prostrate body and measured his length beyond.

Both men were on their feet in an

instant, Hibbing with breast heaving from the exertion, and Burke battered and bleeding, but breathing as evenly as at the outset of the fray. As a sudden flash of anger had caused him to rush blindly into the fight, and had put him at the mercy of his opponent, so another flash of anger, engendered by the cowardly maneuver that had so nearly terminated the affair, now cleared his brain. He was quick to see that Hibbing had staked his chance upon winning in the first rush, an onslaught that left him gasping for breath. And he was quick to press his advantage.

The swollen lips twisted into a smile as he advanced swiftly upon his panting opponent. His fist crashed against Hibbing's mouth with a force that staggered him. The man struck back, and struck again, with a spurt of his former speed, but the blows landed weakly, and served only to spur Burke on. Rapidly, and with precision, Burke drove his blows home.

Hibbing was giving ground now, backing slowly and seeking to block the terrific smashes that landed with the force of a sledge hammer. Again and again Burke reached his face with punches that thudded and battered.

Suddenly, with incredible swiftness, Burke's fist shot straight from the shoulder. The blow landed squarely on Hibbing's jaw—landed with a punch that raised the man clear of the floor and sent him sprawling at the feet of the men upon the opposite side of the circle.

For an instant Hibbing lay, an inert, crumpled mass. Then he struggled weakly to his hands and knees. In two steps Burke was beside him, and, twisting his fingers into the collar of the man's shirt, jerked him to his feet, whirled him about, and headed toward the door.

"Gangway!" he roared, and the close-packed circle parted. As Burke shoved his victim before him, the breathless silence with which the men had watched the fight was broken, and the voices of fifty men were lifted in clamorous approval.

Jerking open the door, he pushed the man across the sill, and on across the trail to the point where the bank slanted sharply to the creek bed, where a mighty kick, administered with accuracy and precision, sent him headlong down the steep slope of hard-packed snow.

As Burke turned to retrace his steps a long, black object upon which the beams of the moon glinted dully slipped unnoticed from beneath his parka and went skittering down the slope upon the path just taken by Hibbing.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"GRUBSTAKE" REIRDON.

The following morning Hibbing peered through a small opening scraped in the thick frost that incrustated the window of "Grubstake" Reirdon's shack, as Burke headed Chaudiare's Malemutes for the great white divide, and fell in behind the sled piled high with Chaudiare's supplies. He noted the waving caps, and faintly to his ears came bull-throated calls of farewell with which the group in front of Bill Weed's sped the man on his way. An evil leer twisted Hibbing's swollen face. He cursed horribly, and started at the unfamiliar sound of the words which lisped strangely through the wide aperture where front teeth should have been. His face was swollen and battered to an even blue, his eyes glared blood red through narrow slits in the puffy skin, while at every movement of his body each bone and muscle racked him with its own devilish trick of torture.

"They're calling you a sour dough now!" he breathed, as the dog train swept into the trail. "And a month ago you were the greenest chechahco in camp! And, by thunder, they're right! Something beyond the divide has put a different look in your eyes. But I'd have got you at that if I hadn't been too sure. And instead—" He groaned aloud with the pain of his tortured gums. "Well, you didn't over-look any bets after you started!"

Again he leered, and, moving pain-

fully across the room, eased himself onto the bunk, and, reaching beneath it, drew forth a long, blue-black object over which he ran his fingers caressingly. It was the object that had come skittering down after him when Burke turned to enter Bill Weed's saloon—a Webley automatic—the only one of its kind in the country. "The first horse was on you, and the second on me," he muttered savagely, "and one throw for the game! Go on back to your breed girl! The last play will be made beyond the divide, and when men find what's left of *you* there'll be more talk of the curse of flat gold!"

The latch rattled. Hibbing hastily slipped the gun from sight as Grubstake Reirdon entered and advanced noisily to the stove.

Reirdon removed his cap and mittens, slammed them into a corner, drew up a pine chair, and poked the fire noisily. "Well," he began, regarding Hibbing with a commiserating look, "yer wife sure scattered the navies las' night. Which I ain't su'prised none whatever. I allus said it, Hibbing, an' I ort to know. An honest man dasn't let no female woman in on no crooked work, 'cause they'll double cross him every time. An' don't yer fergit it."

"I don't need any of your advice," growled Hibbing surlily.

"That's right, you don't. It cost yer just fourteen thousan' dollars to find out what I'd of told you fer nothin'. But that's the way it goes, an' Burke he's lit out fer the Lillimuit with a sledload of supplies. Bought 'em down to Scotty's an' paid fer 'em with flat gold. I tell you, Hibbing, if you'd of listened to me a while back an' grubstaked me like I wanted yer to, you an' me would of 'been fingerin' that there gold 'stead of Burke."

"That gold ain't his," growled Hibbing. "He bought those supplies for Chaudiare."

"Maybe 'tain't—maybe 'tain't," admitted Reirdon, "but jest the same—his gold, or some one else's, he's had the fingerin' of it. The gold come from some place, an' he's over where it's at. It's his own fault if he don't git it.

No, sir, Hibbing, if you'd of listened to me, you an' me'd be rich right now."

Hibbing glanced at the other sharply. "Well, it isn't too late yet," he muttered. "That claim has never been filed. I'd bet my last stack of blues Burke don't know where it is right now. I tell you we can beat him to it!"

"You mean you'd grubstake me?" asked Reirdon quickly.

"I'll do better than that. I'll go along with you. I'll show you a short cut that Burke don't know. I'm the only man that knows it except Chaudiare himself. I'll go to the other side with you, and give you all the dope I have on the country, then I'll stick around on the short cut with a fresh bunch of dogs while you try to locate the mine."

"Why not both try to locate?" asked Reirdon, becoming suddenly uneasy. "Looks like we'd ort to stick together. Course I ain't like some fellers—afraid. I ain't nothin' like that, but you know what folks says about the Lillimuit an' flat gold. Not that I b'lieve it, nor nothin' like that, but we kinder ort to stick together."

Hibbing growled: "You heard what Burke said last night about that idiot jumping onto me and half killing me, and about old man Chaudiare setting me on the long traverse—well, that's because I overplayed my hand. I got in a hurry about trying to locate the mine. If they see me over there, they'll know in a minute what's up, and they wouldn't go near the mine for fear I'd trail 'em in. They don't know you. Anyway, they wouldn't connect you with me if I kept out of the way. They'd think you were just prospecting, and wouldn't pay any attention to you. Then when you trail 'em in, and it comes to a race, I'll be there with the fresh dogs, and we'll have a cinch. Old man Chaudiare shovels gold out of that mine by the scoopful, but of course if you haven't got the guts to go I'll hunt up some one who has."

"Who—me?" asked Reirdon in surprise. "Guts! Me? Guts is my middle name! Jest you trot out your outfit!"

"I'll put up the dust, and you scurry around and see if you can get an outfit together and two strings of dogs without attracting too much attention. Then we'll slip across to the other side and locate that claim, and I'll settle my score with Burke. After that we'll hike back and file. And then—well, I've got another score to settle. I'll teach *her* to double cross me!" He handed Reirdon a pouch heavy with dust. "It's a good thing I pulled that out of Weed's safe yesterday," he said. "It was my birthday—I'm always lucky on my birthday—and I figured on making a killing at the wheel. I would have, too, if Burke hadn't happened in and busted up the party."

"Tain't no ways hard to sagatiate that you was the party he busted up," grinned Reirdon, eying the man's face as he pocketed the pouch. "I'll be back in a bit. I know where I kin git the outfits cheap."

An hour later two heavily loaded dog sleds slipped silently out of Sundown, and Hibbing and Reirdon started upon the journey which in two days, by following Chaudiare's cut-off trail, should have placed them beyond the Lillimuit. But their calculations had taken no reckoning of the fact that Hibbing would head down a wrong valley, a misadventure that cost them three days of futile doubling. Nor did it include the great storm that swept down upon them when but two-thirds of the journey was completed—a storm that held them for four days and four nights in a treeless, ice-locked valley. Burrowing out, they pushed on, and at the point where the short-cut trail emerged into timber country established a camp. This spot was some forty miles north of the Sundown Trail, and fifteen miles northwest of Chaudiare House.

Hibbing had planned his campaign shrewdly. Knowing that Burke had just returned to Chaudiare House with the semiannual supplies, he argued that the camp on the short-cut trail would, in all probability, be safe from discovery while Reirdon was patrolling the country to the northeastward in hope of trailing one of the four occupants of

Chaudiare House to the mine. He himself would stay close by the camp. Not only because he wished to avoid observation, but also because he was taking no chances on Reirdon. For well he knew that should Reirdon succeed in locating the mine and return to the camp in his absence, the man would hesitate not one instant to dash back through the Lillimuit and file the claim in his own right.

Hibbing had no knowledge of the Sundown Trail. On his first trip across the mountains he had followed Chaudiare through the short cut, and by the short cut he had managed to return to Sundown, half dead from starvation and fatigue, when Chaudiare set him upon the long traverse. And Reirdon, he knew, had never been beyond the divide; therefore Reirdon must return to the short cut, where he, Hibbing, would be waiting. As a matter of fact, Reirdon possessed an excellent map of the Sundown Trail—a map that he had cunningly purloined from Sergeant Blake's desk, but of which he had said nothing to Hibbing.

CHAPTER XIX.

"WHERE IS ALINE?"

From the moment he pulled out of Sundown with his load of supplies, Burke made good time. The trail which a short time before had so nearly cost him his life was negotiated almost without incident, and as the low-hung sun dipped behind a sheared ridge he swung the laboring dogs from the wide valley and urged them across the long beaver meadow at the head of which Chaudiare House stood on the shore of Barrier Lake. Loudly he shouted as he urged the malemutes forward, and eagerly he scanned the doorway for sight of the girl. Surely she would be expecting him. This was the day they had both figured, barring storms, that he should return. And he had encountered no storms. All through the long miles of the dreaded Lillimuit he had pictured her running to meet him across that wide beaver meadow, and now he had negotiated more than half

its length, and save for a plume of blue smoke that ascended from the wide chimney, Chaudiare House stood somber and silent amid its clustering pines. Filling his lungs, he called loudly, and his own voice mocked him from the echoing ridges. She must have heard that call. A sudden fear assailed him, and, leaving the dogs to their own pace, he dashed ahead and pushed into the great living room.

In his chair before the fireplace sat Chaudiare, his right arm suspended in a rude sling, while his left hand closed about the bowl of his huge porcelain pipe. The old man removed the stem of the pipe from his mouth.

"It is you, Monsieur Burke, and you have returned with the supplies?"

Burke restrained his impatience. Evidently nothing of a serious nature had occurred, for Chaudiare seemed unperturbed. "Yes, sir," he answered, smiling, "and this time without mishap."

The older man regarded him critically. "A good trip. A trip many an older and more experienced man would have hesitated to take. Had I been consulted, I should have been slow to have given my consent, but my daughter seemed confident that you would get through. I am deeply indebted to you, Monsieur Burke, both for this, and in the matter of my injury."

Burke interrupted him hurriedly: "Not at all! Not at all! In fact, it is I who am indebted to you. You saved my life, and I have eaten your bread for a month. The trip was nothing."

The old man made a motion with his huge pipe as if to dismiss the subject, and lapsed into silence. Burke fumbled a book upon the table, and glanced toward the imperturbable smoker—that strange, silent man in the North who was not of the North. In his make-up was nothing of the hearty bluntness, the man mark of fellowship that he had learned to associate with the men of the White Country. He was cordial enough in his way, but it was not the way of the North. There was a certain aloofness about him—a

me-and-thou atmosphere of reserve that was cold, yet held nothing of the sinister. He had welcomed Burke's return to his house, and had acknowledged his indebtedness with an impersonal punctiliousness that jarred upon Burke's mood. For this was not at all the welcome that had cheered the long miles of the snow trail.

Old Tete waddled heavily in and lighted the lamp, regarded Burke with a wooden stare, and waddled out again. The dogs whimpered at the door, and Burke went out, turned them into the log corral, and tossed them an armful of fish which he dug from under the snow on the platform of a pole cache.

When he reentered the house supper was steaming upon the table. And with a grandiose wave of the hand, Chaudiere motioned him to a chair, seated himself opposite, and invoked an interminable blessing in French, after which he silently attacked his meat. The moment Burke entered the room he had noticed that the table had been laid for two.

"Where is Aline?" he asked abruptly.

The old man looked up quickly as he detected a note of anxiety in the voice. For a long moment he regarded Burke intently.

"My daughter has gone," he answered simply, and returned his attention to the food upon his plate.

"Gone! Gone where?" cried Burke, his eyes upon the bearded face.

"To carry meat to a band of starving Indians."

"Indians! Why, she hates Indians!"

Chaudiere's eyes met Burke's. "You know my daughter very well," he said coldly.

"Know her!" The younger man fairly shouted the words as he banged the table with his clenched fist. "I love her! In all the world there is no woman like her! Tell me, why did she go? And where?"

For answer the old man drew from the pocket of his shirt a folded square of paper. Burke fairly snatched the missive from his hand, and read the words penciled in an angular, girlish hand:

DEAR FATHER: An Indian just arrived from the Laird Lake country with word that his people, a band of the Louchoux, are starving. There are only a dozen or fifteen in the band, and when help arrives from the Mackenzie it may be too late. I am taking them a load of caribou meat. I knew you would not refuse. I dare not tell you before. I start for fear you will forbid my going and undertake the trip yourself. Yours in haste,
ALINE.

"Where is Laird Lake?" Burke asked quickly.

"Fifty miles to the northeastward."

"When did she start?"

"Some time during the night before last. I found this note pinned to my blanket yesterday morning when I awoke."

"But the trail? Does she know the trail? Suppose something should happen? Suppose she should meet with an accident?"

Chaudiere regarded him gravely. "I think she does not know the trail, but she returned with the Indian who brought the news, and as for accidents"—the old man shrugged—"who can tell?"

"But the dogs? Where did she get the dogs?"

"There were three old ones and a young one here and three of yours. It is not a long trail. Two days, or three, should see them upon the shore of Laird Lake."

Burke reread the note, and, laying it beside his plate, bolted the food before him in wolfish haste. Rising from the table, he threw open the door, and began rapidly to unload the sled, piling its contents promiscuously upon the floor. Chaudiere finished more leisurely, and as Burke swung a pack of flour from his shoulder the old man spoke:

"Do not bother with the sled, Monsieur Burke; Tete can attend to that. You are just in from a long trail, and you can rest while we smoke by the fireside."

"I need no rest," answered Burke curtly, "and I'm not going to waste any time. Already the wind is whipping the clouds in great, ragged patches across the sky. There is a storm brew-

ing, and before morning it will be howling about our ears."

The old man nodded. "The feel of snow is in the air," he concurred; "it is a night for the fireside."

"Fireside!" roared Burke, turning upon him with blazing eyes. "Do you think I'm going to sit by the fireside and smoke while she is out there somewhere on an unknown trail with a bunch of decrepit dogs and a half-starved Indian? With you it is different. You're not fit to travel. But as soon as I can throw the harness on the dogs I'm off for Laird Lake."

Chaudiere regarded him for a moment in silence. "And how will you find Laird Lake?" he asked. "There is no trail."

"No trail!" cried Burke. "I may be a chechahco, but I can follow the trail of a heavily loaded sled in the snow!"

The old man crossed to the open door. The steadily rising wind howled about the corners and eaves of the house and moaned wildly through the branches of the lashing pines. Burke passed him, and a moment later entered with another package from the sled, and Chaudiere pointed to a sprinkling of snow powder that instantly melted into little drops upon his shirt. "Your storm," he said, "is upon us. In an hour, probably in half that time, all trails will be obliterated. No man living can start out this night and reach Laird Lake alive."

"But Aline!" cried Burke. "Out there in the wilderness! She's facing the storm! Do you think I can sit and quietly smoke by the fireside while she may be starving or freezing or lost—boring blindly through the white smother until—until——"

"You forget, monsieur," broke in Chaudiere, laying a hand upon his arm, "that she has been gone two days and a night and part of another night. If she is not at this moment safe in the tepees of the Louchoux, she is so near them that the remainder of the journey will only be a matter of hours. She has plenty of meat, and the Indian will see that she is neither lost nor frozen. I am her father. She is all I

have in the world. Can you think that if I believed her to be in serious danger I would seek to detain you from going to her aid? She is a child of the North. Time and again she has weathered blizzards, and with far scantier outfits than her present one. No, Monsieur Burke, you may rest assured that if I believed my daughter to be in danger, beyond the ordinary dangers of the winter trail, not only would I urge you, but accompany you to the rescue. To start out alone this night would be to throw your life away on a fool's errand. Come, Tete will finish the unpacking while we smoke."

Again Burke opened the door, and through the whirling snow the sled showed blurred and indistinct in the broad panel of lamplight. For an instant he hesitated, gazing into the riot of writhing flakes, fine and dry as flour dust, and so cold they seared like points of steel. The old man was right. Neither dog nor man could face the fury of the storm, and, with a growl of disappointment, he closed the door and entered the great living room.

For an hour Chaudiere smoked his huge porcelain pipe in silence, blowing blue clouds into the air. The only sounds were the roar of the flames up the wide chimney, the muffled moan of the wind, and the dull clinking that came from the bearskin in the corner, where Maung played unceasingly with his flakes of gold. Burke smoked his black pipe in short, quick puffs, emptied it, refilled it, turned aimlessly the leaves of a book, and a dozen times arose to stalk to the window and gaze into the opaque night.

The old man was the first to speak. "Why did you come across the mountains?" he asked abruptly.

"Why, for gold, of course—at first!"

"Have you found gold?"

Burke smiled, and Chaudiere saw that his eyes glowed softly as he stared into the flames. "No," he answered, "I have not found gold. But, here in the wilderness, I found that which in the scale of human happiness outweighs all the gold in the world—the love of a woman."

"You are not the first to come to Chaudiare House with words of love on your lips."

"I know," Burke answered. "Aline told me."

Chaudiare ignored the interruption. "He returned empty-handed—that other."

Burke smiled. "But if I never find an ounce of gold, I cannot go away empty-handed. For I am rich! I have won the love of the most adorable woman in the world."

The old man glanced at him sharply. "She had told you of her love?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes, and in the same breath she told me she could never marry me."

"And why?" asked Chaudiare. "Did she tell you why she could never marry you?"

"She told me nothing. Nor did she tell me why she hates the Indians. But I know now that the reasons are the same." Burke rose abruptly and paced the floor. Suddenly he paused before the old man and spoke rapidly. "What do I care," he broke out, "whether or not she is a half-breed? I love her! I have known many women, and of them all she is the most wonderful—the dearest—the most beautiful! I would marry her if she were *all* Indian."

A peculiar expression crept into Chaudiare's eyes at Burke's words. He answered nothing, and after a few moments of silence arose and passed into his own room.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRAIL TO THE NORTHWARD.

For four days and four nights the great storm raged with the furious abandon of the midwinter storms of the arctic. In the house on Barrier Lake, Gaston Chaudiare smoked in silence by the fireside or read for hours at a time from the books that lined the shelves of the great living room, while Burke, chafing under the enforced inaction, relaced his rackets, mended sled and harness, and between times smoked innumerable pipefuls of

strong tobacco while his brain conjured a thousand possible dangers to which Aline might be exposed.

On the morning of the fifth day he flung open the door, and was confronted by a wall of solid white that reached to within a foot of the lintel. Through the narrow aperture above the top of the drift, he could see that the wind had died down, snow had ceased to fall, and across the white reach of the beaver meadow the contour of the scrub-topped ridge was faintly discernible in the first gray light of dawn. Overhead wan stars twinkled feebly in a clear sky, and, with an exclamation of relief, Burke carried a chair to the doorway, and, mounting it, scrambled through the opening, sending an avalanche of snow to the floor of the room.

It was a changed world that greeted him. The familiar landmarks in the immediate vicinity of Chaudiare House were all but obliterated. A huge drift completely buried the west wall of the pole dog corral, and swept upward to include the platform of the cache, whereon was stored the winter's supply of frozen fish and caribou meat. Scenting the food, the dogs had scrambled up the sloping surface of the drift, burrowed into the wind-packed snow, and were fighting fiercely over a frozen caribou haunch. Burke beat them back, and, plunging through the doorway, returned a moment later with a shovel and attacked the drift to such good purpose that at the end of an hour the sloping apron of snow, by means of which the Malemutes had scrambled over the wall, was leveled. After which he turned his attention to the huge drift that blocked the living-room doorway. Impatient to be off in search of Aline, he contented himself with gouging a passage through which one might scramble without filling the house with snow. When this was accomplished, Chaudiare summoned him to breakfast.

"It was a great storm," said the old man, eying the drift. "The worst in many years. The hunt pack will be abroad to-night, keen with hunger after four days of fasting. We must look to the cache and level the snow from

the platform, else our meat will be fodder for the wolves."

For answer Burke nodded toward old Tete. "She can attend to that!" he exclaimed almost fiercely. "I'll wait no longer! Within the hour I start for Laird Lake. If you can sit calmly by, unknowing and unmindful of *her* fate, I can't!"

With uplifted hand the old man interrupted him. "Patience, Monsieur Burke. Under the spur of impulse young blood acts rashly. The exigencies of the North are urgent and must be dealt with in cold reason. Emergencies arise and must be met in the order of their relative importance. The North is a grim land in which a thousand bleaching skeletons mark each an error of judgment. What good could come of the journey to Laird Lake? What has happened has happened. In all probability my daughter has made the trip without mishap, and, if so, is now safe in the tepees of the Louchoux. If the trip was not made in safety—if disaster has overtaken them"—Chaudiare waved his hand toward the high-piled drifts—"the North will guard well her secret. It is impossible for Tete alone to remove the drift from about the platform before nightfall. The winter's provisions for ourselves and our dogs will be left to the mercy of the hunt pack. Even if you succeed in locating Laird Lake, which is extremely doubtful, as it is a small lake, and you know not the lay of the land, you will merely find out a little sooner what we shall know eventually. Or you will accompany my daughter to Chaudiare House, to which, if her journey has been successful, she will return with an Indian guide. Is it better, think you, that she should return to find the meat in the bellies of the hunt pack, or safe upon the platform of the cache?"

As Burke listened to the words of the old man his heart raged against their cold, calculating analysis, while his brain could not fail to respect the logic of his argument. With a rasp of impatience, he pushed his chair from the table, and, donning cap and mit-

tens, seized his shovel and attacked the huge drift, in which task he was joined later by Tete and Chaudiare himself, who, despite his injury, performed a man's work, trampling back the snow and wielding his shovel with one hand. All day the three worked unceasingly, and by nightfall the platform of the cache was once more safe from the fangs of prowling marauders.

The old man stepped from his room at daylight the following morning to find Burke gone. And from time to time during the long day, as he smoked by the fireside, an unwonted smile hovered about the stern lips.

Early as was Burke's departure from Chaudiare House, Maung had preceded him, and unconsciously he fell into the idiot's trail, which headed northward, with a slight trend to the east. Hour after hour he mushed, while the dogs, drawing the lightly loaded sled, followed easily. Early darkness gathered, and still the trail of the idiot held unswerving upon its course. The country was densely wooded with scrub, and when darkness at length rendered the trail indiscernible, Burke camped, pitching his shelter tarp in the lee of a windfall.

Daylight once more found him following the idiot's unswerving trail. As the day wore into mid-afternoon, he became more and more convinced that Maung was traveling under the urge of a definite object. The country grew rougher. Rolling foothills and rounded ridges gave place to rugged spurs, and the sides of the narrow valleys became cliffs of naked rock that rose sheer, and showed black and ugly against the background of snow. The trail dipped sharply into an ice-gored valley, and at the foot of the pitch Burke halted abruptly to stare at the marks in the snow. Another trail slanted into the trail of Maung—a trail that swung in from the westward!

Under the able tutelage of Aline, Burke had learned to read much from the marks which appeared in the snow. Taking care not to disturb the sign, he studied it minutely. The new trail had been made by one who traveled

upon rackets and who was accompanied by a dog train. That the man had come upon the idiot's trail unexpectedly was evidenced by the fact that he had halted to scrutinize the tracks before following them. The number of his dogs and the shape and lacing of his rackets showed that he was a white man. Burke noted that he had increased his pace as he swung into the new trail.

Who was this lone traveler of the snow waste? Surely not O'Reily's friend, Dinny McGuire, who had been too long gone for the provisions he had carried. Could it be possible that Hibbing— But certainly Hibbing would not venture alone into the country of Chaudiere, who had sent him upon the long traverse, especially after the manhandling he had received from Burke, whom he knew now for Chaudiere's friend. But, if neither of these, who? There was one way to answer the question, and Burke swung the dogs into the trail of the man who had gone before.

As the other had done, Burke redoubled his pace, being able, upon the smoother sweeps, to throw himself upon the lightly loaded sled and give head to the dogs, which strained willingly against the traces as they followed the scent of their kind.

The trail crosscut the lay of the land, and, except upon broad stretches of beaver meadow and snow-buried muskeg, proved an endless succession of ridges and deep valleys. Upon the crest of each ridge the sign showed that the man had paused to take cautious survey of the fore trail.

Gradually the shadows lengthened, and the trail slanted into a valley whose floor was untouched by the rays of the low-hung sun. Here evidently the man from the west had come in sight of Maung, for his trail swerved sharply from the tracks of the idiot to the side of the deep valley, where it clung to the thick scrub and rock fragments at the base of the ridge. The two trails ran closely parallel, and, keeping both in sight, Burke plunged forward. He had proceeded a scant half mile toward

the head of the rapidly narrowing valley, when, upon rounding an abrupt angle of rock, a creature with lowered head catapulted down the back trail, and with terrific force crashed squarely into his middle. With the breath knocked from his body, Burke was hurled backward into the snow. The shock of the collision sprawled the other also, and as Burke sat up, gasping for air, he found himself staring into the wide-set, lashless eyes of the idiot, from whose catfish mouth poured a volley of horrible sound. The next moment Maung scrambled to his feet. With an effort, Burke filled his lungs and called to him, but without so much as a backward look the idiot bounded down the back trail, while the walls of the valley reëchoed his screams.

Burke regained his feet, and, with one swift glance toward the rapidly diminishing form of Maung, pushed on up the trail. He had not far to go. A few hundred yards farther on, the valley terminated abruptly, and he was confronted by a perpendicular wall of rock which towered to a height of several hundred feet. At the foot of the wall stood a sled, with the dogs still in harness. But there was no sign of a man, and not until he was within five yards of the spot did he perceive a low opening under the edge of a rock—an opening whose floor was of ice from which the snow had been recently thrown aside. It was here that the creek whose valley he had been following gushed from the mountain. The next moment a white, terror-stricken face appeared in the opening, and a man wormed his way, belly-wise, from under the huge rock. For a single instant the eyes, wide with horror, glared into Burke's face; then his voice rose in a quavering howl of terror that ended in a hoarse moan, and the muscles of his body went suddenly limp, so that he lay, flaccid, inanimate, with his face on the cold, ice floor. With an exclamation of surprise, Burke leaped forward, grasped the limp form by the shoulders, and propped it against the pile of loose snow that had been scraped from the mouth of the cavern.

At sight of the features, he started in surprise. The man was Reirdon! Burke remembered him as a familiar figure in Sundown, and suddenly into his mind flashed the memory of the scrap of conversation he had heard at Bill Weed's bar, when Reirdon had importuned Sorenson to grubstake him for a prospecting trip beyond the divide. He remembered with peculiar distinctness that the man had laid stress upon the fact that the search would be for "flat gold—the kind that lays in pockets." He remembered also that he had mentioned Chaudiare's name, and had expressed a belief that he could trail him to his diggings and then beat him to the recorder's office. Also he vaguely remembered that the man had mentioned a girl.

Suddenly Burke jerked himself erect. Could it be— Was it possible that the low, flat hole from which he had dragged the unconscious Reirdon was the mouth of Chaudiare's mine? And, if so, what lay beyond the dark opening that could have reduced Reirdon to a state of nervous and abject terror. At thought of the livid face and the wide-staring eyes, Burke felt an uncomfortable, prickling sensation at the base of his scalp. With a short exclamation of anger, he pulled himself together, and with scarcely a thought for the still form in the snow stooped and peered into the aperture. Instead of the intense blackness he expected, a flare of light showed dimly in what seemed to be a broad chamber at the end of a low, dark passage. The light burned unsteadily, casting weird figures upon the rocks and throwing into alternate relief and shadow the rough knobs and excrescences of the walls. The source of the light, which burned with a reddish glow, was invisible, and even as Burke wriggled himself into the opening he knew in his heart that he wished himself elsewhere.

A few feet beyond the opening, the roof sheered upward, allowing him to negotiate the thirty or forty feet of passage leading to the chamber on his hands and knees. He proceeded with extreme caution, pausing at short inter-

vals to listen and to peer into the wavering half light, but before him the cavern preserved a tomblike silence. The only sound that came to his ears was the uneasy whimpering of the dogs as they sniffed at the mouth of the passage. Abruptly he emerged into a chamber, a room of some twenty feet in diameter, whose walls and ceiling were of solid rock, and whose floor, rising gently from the narrow bed of the frozen creek, was of gravel.

At the base of the farther wall, in a shallow pan of beaten copper, a twisted bit of rag sputtered in a pool of melted fat. Close beside the pan a pile of leaves and spruce boughs suggested the bed of some animal, while against the wall rested a bar, two or three miners' picks, and a shovel. These, together with a battered gold pan and a rough log trough that slanted along the wall, constituted the entire furnishing of the chamber. Burke took in all this at a glance, and, standing erect, minutely examined the walls for crack or crevice or black-mouthed hole that could possibly have harbored the thing that had unnerved Reirdon. But on every side the rock presented an unbroken surface, and with a puzzled frown he stepped onto the frozen gravel for closer examination of the rude bed of leaves. A shallow depression had been scooped in the gravel near the center of the room, and it was at the edge of this that his mukluks came in contact with a little pile of loose fragments which scattered over the floor with a dull, clinking sound.

Burke dropped to his knees, and, recovering a handful of the fragments, crawled to the light, where he held them close to the smoking, guttering flame as he stared, wide-eyed, upon the handful of blackened flat flakes, and from them to the gravel that was the floor of the cave. His breath came in quick gasps, and beneath his ribs his heart pounded wildly. In his hand he held gold—heavy and clean and flat—and beneath his feet was gold! He stared about him stupidly, and then, even as Maung upon his bearskin, he tilted his hand and allowed the flat flakes to drib-

ble slowly to the ground, listening in tense fascination as they clinked dully upon the frozen gravel. Again and again he scooped the flat flakes from the floor and poured them back again. He strove to think, but his brain seemed numb.

"Flat gold—flat gold!" Over and over, to the rhythm of the clinking flakes, the words repeated themselves in his brain until his lips unconsciously framed them. The rock walls took up the muttered words and hurled them back upon him in sepulchral bombilation. "Flat gold!" The sound rang harsh, hollow, mocking, and, leaping to his feet, Burke stood like one suddenly awakened from a trance. A moment later he dropped to his hands and knees, and made his way along the smooth ice of the tunnel toward the opening, where he wormed beneath the low-hung ledge of rock.

The stars were gleaming coldly overhead, and Burke stared about him in surprise. In the dim light his eyes swept the upper reach of the cañonlike valley. Reirdon was gone! Reirdon's seven-dog team was gone! And Burke's own dogs, with a runner of the overturned sled jammed beneath a gnarled root, were whimpering and straining with their noses toward the back trail. Instantly he sprang to the sled, and as he did so tripped over an object that protruded from the snow. It was a stake. Reirdon had staked the claim, and was even now heading for the recorder's office at Sundown! It was but the work of a moment for Burke to rip the ax from the overturned sled, slash down a stunted willow, and jam his own stakes into the snow close beside Reirdon's. A few moments more and he had righted the sled, thrown himself upon it, and, with a yell to the dogs, sent them tearing over Reirdon's trail.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RACE FOR THE SUNDOWN TRAIL.

As the eight great Malemutes bounded down the valley, Burke had no slightest doubt of his ability to overtake Reirdon. True, his dogs, just off

the long trail from Sundown, had been called upon for this new venture. But they were huge, finely muscled brutes, well fed and in good heart, and the sled was lightly loaded, while Reirdon had been forced to pack provisions for a journey of indefinite length. What concerned him most was the fact that in his pursuit of Reirdon he was forced to abandon his search of Aline.

The words of Chaudiare recurred to his mind: "Emergencies arise and must be met in the order of their relative importance. . . . What has happened. . . . What good could come of the journey to Laird Lake?" And in the light of their cold reason his expedition in search of the girl suddenly assumed the aspect of selfish gratification of his own anxiety. Clearly the present situation constituted an emergency—an emergency which he, Burke, must meet unaided. At the hazard of life itself he must reach Sundown before Reirdon.

His jaw clamped grimly at the thought of the long, bleak miles of the Lillimuit. Six days at the very least, barring accidents and storms, lay between him and the recorder's office in Sundown. On his sled was food for three days, but that would cause little inconvenience. If all goes well, a man may travel far on half rations, and if all does not go well—he shrugged after the manner of Chaudiare, and smiled grimly—well, the North will have one more secret to guard.

At the point where the trail ascended the first ridge, Burke leaped from the sled. A dark object in the snow attracted his attention, and, as he raised it in his hands, he laughed. It was a bag containing eight or ten pounds of pemmican. He threw it upon his sled, and, a little farther up the slope, added a bag of pilot bread to his outfit. "The fool!" he muttered. "He's throwing away his grub to lighten his load. Go to it, old-timer! All I need now is a stove and a can of fuel, and I'll make the Alaska Sweepstakes look like a sack race."

It was well for Burke's peace of mind that he was ignorant of the fact that

Hibbing was waiting in a camp at the head of Chaudiere's cut-off trail with a fresh team of dogs and supplies to relay Reirdon to Sundown. Over ridges and down into valleys plunged the dogs, and at the end of an hour, as they shot out onto a half-mile-wide beaver meadow, a shout was borne faintly to Burke's ears, and far across the snow level, in the uncertain starlight, he thought he could make out the form of a flying sled, but even as he looked the thing plunged into the blackness of the scrub.

In the next valley he saw the sled distinctly, and on the ascent of the ridge came full upon Reirdon as he urged his dogs up the steep slope. With a wild yell, the man faced about, fumbling feverishly for the rifle that was bound to the top of his load. So ludicrous was his terror that Burke laughed aloud.

"Hold on, Reirdon!" he called. "It's only me—Burke! I'm not going to bite you!" Reirdon ceased fumbling at the rifle, and peered into Burke's face as he spoke. "What's the matter with you? You look like you'd seen a ghost. And you've sure been hitting the trail like the devil was after you."

"Did you see it, too?" muttered the man, his teeth chattering.

"The devil himself, an' worse than the devil—an' flat gold layin' loose on the floor! Oh, Lordy, Lordy, what a face! All eyes an' mouth an' hair! I wisht I never seen flat gold! But it's there! It's there! Me an' Hibbing, we'll be rich!"

"Hibbing!" cried Burke. "Where is Hibbing? What's he got to do with it?"

The question revived Reirdon's nerves. "Oh, Hibbing," he said in a voice that had lost its note of terror. "Why, he's back in Sundown, I guess. He grubstaked me."

"Hitting for Sundown to file, eh?" asked Burke. "I may as well tell you you've got a race on. I'm bound for there myself. But that's no reason why we should kill ourselves or our dogs. Suppose we knock off and call it a day.

We'll camp here and start even up in the morning."

"That's reason'ble," acquiesced Reirdon. "Tell you the truth, I'm 'bout all in. But, dog-gone me, if I'd of camped out here alone! Not fer a million dollars I wouldn't—not with that *thing* loose in the woods! Did you see it, too?" he asked, peering anxiously into Burke's face.

Burke laughed. "I don't know what you're talking about. Come on, let's camp. A good rest and a cup of hot tea will make you all right again."

Reirdon raised a hand that, even in the starlight, Burke could see trembled, and drew it slowly across his brow. "All right—all right," he mumbled thickly. "Oh, Lordy, I wonder if—if the flat gold's got me?" Suddenly he leaped forward, shaking a fist before Burke's face. "It *was* real!" he cried. "I seen it! I thought they'd be a man in there. The tracks was the tracks of rackets. An' it was dark, an' I crawled in an' lit a match, an' I seen the blubber lamp, an' no more'n I touched flame to the wick when"—again the man paused and shuddered violently—"when up out of a pile of leaves r'ared that face. A hull minute it gawked at me, an' blinked with eyes big as teacups, while I stud there an' froze inside. An' then, with a yell that like to split the mountain, it made fer the tunnel an' left me there alone with the flarin' blubber lamp, an' the flat gold all over the floor. I tell you I was scairt. I was worse than scairt; I was plumb petrified. But I couldn't stay there, an' the thing had went out the way I come in! Believe me, if they'd be'n a back door, I'd of took it! But they worn't none, an' I follered out after him, an' jest as I got to the openin' there it stud a-waitin'. Only it had changed to the face of a man!"

Again the man passed his hand over his brow. "Next thing I recollect, I was settin' propped agin' a pile of snow. They wasn't no man, then, an', instead, the thing had changed to a dog team—big Malemutes they was, 'bout twelve or fifteen of 'em—four times bigger'n yourn. My legs was a-shaking, but

I had my stakes ready, an' I stopped an' druv 'em in an' then I headed my dogs hell-bent over the back trail! I looked back onct, and them devil dogs was a-trying to foller. They was a-strainin' agin' the harness, but somethin' was holdin' 'em back—somethin' I couldn't see, an'—an' jest now, when you come up behine me, I thought it was them."

Supper over, the two spread their blankets, and Burke noted, with a grin, that Reirdon edged his bed as close as possible to the fire. A few minutes later he dropped to sleep, knowing well that no matter how great the other's greed he would die rather than pull out alone during the night.

When Burke awoke the following morning, Reirdon was preparing breakfast. The two fed their dogs, and later, as they drank their scalding tea, Burke was aware that the other was eying him furtively. Daylight seemed to have restored the man's nerve. The wild look was gone from his eyes. His hands no longer trembled. Finally he spoke.

"'Bout that claim," he began. "You must of found it after me, 'cause they wa'n't no stakes when I sunk mine."

Burke nodded. "But they're there now," he answered shortly, "and the claim will belong to the one who files first."

"That's what I was a-gettin' at," answered Reirdon. "Course my stakes was in first, but, as you say, that ain't filin'. An' ag'in I'm a sour dough an' used to hittin' long trails, an' you're a chechahco an' hain't. 'Tain't no question but what, if we was to race clean to Sundown, I'd beat you to it. But I'm willin' to go pardners with you, an' both go round by the long trail an' not kill us or our dogs neither, an' then we can file together."

"What do you mean—the long trail?" asked Burke.

Reirdon's glance shifted uneasily. "Why, the trail you come out on from Sundown—and me, too," he added hastily. "They is a short cut, folks says. Chaudiare knows it. I kinder figured mebbe, goin' back, I'd see if I couldn't find it."

"You're welcome," answered Burke,

"to hunt for any short cuts through the Lillimuit you want to. For me there's only one trail. I know that one, and I'm not going to do any experimenting—not with the Lillimuit. And here's another thing: There'll be no partnership about this claim. Either you'll file it or I will; that is, unless we both get bushed. It's each man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost."

"Just as you say," growled Reirdon. "But I've trailed, it's goin' on twenty year. You ain't got no show."

"I'll take a chance," laughed Burke, and noticed, out of the tail of his eye, that the other was regarding him balefully. Something in the glance was disquieting, sinister. And Burke realized that the sooner the opportunity came for him to leave Reirdon behind—and far behind—the better would be his chance of reaching Sundown.

Both men arranged their packs and harnessed their dogs as they talked, and a few moments later Reirdon swept out upon the trail, followed closely by Burke.

Reirdon grinned as his dogs mushed steadily southward. "All I got to do," he muttered, "is to hit a pace that'll wear down his dawgs right on the start, then when we reach the cut-off Hibbing an' me'll take the fresh team and walk right away from him. It's his own fault. I give him a'chanct. I'd rather have him for a pardner than Hibbing. An' if he'd of throwed in with me, we could have give the cut-off a wide berth an' hit fer Sundown the long way round an' left Hibbing whistle for hisn. I don't trust Hibbing nohow. He's crooked."

In the edge of a thicket of scrub, the man's reflections were cut short by the action of his lead dog, which, with a low snarl, leaped abruptly from the trail, dragging his teammates with him. The man rushed forward, cursing. Directly in the trail, at the foot of a stunted banskian, lay a huddled form. The following team halted perforce, and Burke was almost at his elbow when Reirdon stooped, and, seizing the prostrate form by the shoulder, turned it upon its back. The next instant he

leaped backward with a cry of horror. For the face into which he looked was the misshapen, chinless face that had stared at him from the bed of leaves.

"It's him!" he shrieked. "It's him! The devil of the flat-gold cave!"

Reirdon was shaking violently, and his face had gone the color of snow. Dropping to his knee, Burke raised the idiot's head upon his arm, and, throwing off a mitten, slipped his hand beneath the heavy parka.

"He's alive!" he cried, as his fingers detected a distinct beating of the heart. The fact that the idiot had fallen with his face upon the sleeve of his fur parka had undoubtedly saved him from freezing. The cause of the accident was evident. In his headlong dash over the back trail, a protruding root had snagged his racket, and a huge, blue lump on the forehead showed where his head had come into violent contact with the trunk of the banskian. So intent was Burke upon ascertaining the extent of the idiot's injuries that he failed to note that Reirdon, working in a frenzy of haste, had almost succeeded in detouring his outfit to a point farther along the trail.

"Come back here, you coward!" he roared. "Come back and help me get him onto my sled!"

Reirdon passed only long enough to cast a terrified glance at the twisted form in the snow. "Not me!" he cried. "Not that *thing*! I wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole! Not in a thousand years I wouldn't! Leave him lay! You thought I was crazy! You thought the flat gold had got me! But there it is—the *thing* I was tellin' you 'bout! Leave it lay, I tell you! It would be bad enough if it was dead, but it hain't; it's alive!"

Burke grinned at the man's abject terror. "Come on, you fool! We can't leave him like this. He's only a harmless idiot. He belongs at Chaudiare House. We've got to get him home."

"You ain't talkin' to me!" screamed Reirdon. "I won't do it! He ain't harmless! It's a trick—a trick of yourn an' Chawtheair's to git me to Chawtheair House an' set me on the

long traverse, like he done Hibbing, but it ain't a-goin' to work!"

"Come on; be a sport," urged Burke, ignoring the objection. "I'll vouch for your safety. We'll take him to Chaudiare House, and the race will still be even. If you hold to the trail, and I have to swing round by way of Barrier Lake, I'll lose a half a day."

"That's jest the way I figger it!" said Reirdon, somewhat recovered from his terror. "An', believe me, I'm a-goin' to! If you're fool enough to resk losin' a chanct on the best strike in the North a-haulin' eejuts round the country that's your fault. I'm gone." The man had regained the trail.

"I'll settle with you later!" roared Burke. "What I did to Hibbing won't be a patch on what I'll do to you! When you hit Sundown you better keep on going!" The last words rang on the empty air, for Reirdon had disappeared from sight around the near-by bed of the trail.

CHAPTER XXII.

FATHIER TACHE.

From the moment of Burke's departure for Sundown, Aline Chaudiare began to count the days and the hours that must elapse before his return. She herself had never made the journey, but she knew something of the terrors of the treeless Lillimuit—the broad stretch of world waste that no living, breathing thing calls home. Each night she added to her prayers a fervent petition for his welfare, and from the moment of her awakening she pictured him mushing over the dreary miles of the snow trail.

Those were bitter days for the girl—days in which she viewed the vital problem of her life from every conceivable angle. Long before he had told her of his love, she had known of it—had known also that her love for him thrilled the uttermost fiber of her being. It was not by chance she had put her academic questions to him that night by the fireside. A hundred times since she had repeated to herself, over and over, word for word, his an-

swers. No one but she knew the pain of them nor the mighty conflict that surged day by day within her breast. There were times when the wild, fierce love of her would sweep aside the puny forces of conscience, and she would decide that in spite of his words she would marry him.

What mattered it that the skin of her mother had been white or red? In color, at heart, and in mind she herself was a white woman. Why need she tell him she was an Indian? If she did not tell him, he need never know.

But she knew she would tell him—*must* tell him, and renounce him. With the rugged austerity of her native mountains, she steeled herself for the crisis, for she knew the impetuous nature of the man she loved—knew he would seek to beat down and override the barrier that he himself had raised, and that she must conquer, not only the wild passion of her own heart, but of his as well.

Thus the days dragged. Never once did it enter her head to take her father into her confidence. Though she had lived with him always, Gaston Chaudiere was as much a strange, silent man of mystery to her as he was to the men of the North. Yet these two loved each other after a strange manner of love which had grown up between them. Each would unhesitatingly risk life for the other, but neither at any time knew what was passing in the other's mind.

With Burke's anticipated arrival only two days away, the Louchoux appeared one night with the tale of his starving people. It was upon an evening of her blackest mood. Chaudiere had early sought his blankets, and for hours Aline sat alone by the blazing fire. She would meet Burke, she decided, at a point some ten miles down the trail, and for a little while, probably for the last time, they would be alone, for the girl had made up her mind not to put off the words that would be the blighting words of her life. But for this one time she had promised herself the little happiness of those last miles together—miles in the traveling of which she

had determined to thrust back the impending clouds and spend in the sunshine of their old comradeship.

And then the Indian came, staggering weakly into the room and mouthing his story in broken jargon. As the man talked, Aline knew that she must go. Once more the hated race loomed a grisly horror between her and the happiness which was her right. Not satisfied with ruining her life with the taint of their savage blood, they must needs loom out of the frozen night and snatch from her the little meed of pleasure that was to have been her last. When the Indian finished, the girl rose, her hands gripping the back of her chair. The white teeth sank into her nether lip until the blood flowed, and in that instant, though he knew it not, the half-starved Louchoux stood upon the very threshold of his happy hunting ground. Then, while her father slept, and the Indian wolfed down an incredible quantity of cold meat and scalding tea, the girl scribbled her note upon a flyleaf ripped from a book, donned her trail gear, and with her own hands jerked caribou haunches from the platform of the pole cache, loaded them onto a sled, and harnessed her team of ill-assorted dogs. When her task was completed she summoned the Indian and started on her trail for Laird Lake.

Before noon of the day upon which Burke arrived at Chaudiere House, Aline Chaudiere found herself in the tepees of the starving Louchoux.

During the afternoon, while she slept upon a pile of skins in the corner of a tepee, came Father Tache and another, bringing supplies from the mission on the Mackenzie.

Almost with their arrival the storm broke, and when Aline awoke and would have set out immediately for Chaudiere House, one tepee was not visible from another in the whirling void of white. As she turned from the flap of the tepee, her heart bitter with disappointment, an old squaw who had been sitting beside the smoking wood fire told her of the arrival of the white men—told her also that that very night,

in the lodge of the chief, was to be a great potlatch in honor of their deliverance. He of the long white hair had so ordered, and it was even now time that they should go. Aline was in no mood for festivities, and she curtly, almost savagely, declined the invitation, and, dragging a robe from the pile that had been her bed, spread it and threw herself down beside the fire. Whereupon, the old woman, gazing in wonder upon one who would voluntarily remain away from a potlatch, waddled to the door and was swallowed up in the storm.

An hour passed during which the girl stared moodily into the ill-burning, smoking fire, and then the flap of the tepee was drawn back and a face appeared framed in the aperture. Aline was quick to resent the intrusion, for the face was the face of a white man.

"Well?" she snapped, and the word held nothing of welcome. The lips in the doorway smiled, the head intruded farther into the lodge, and for the first time the girl noticed the wealth of long, silvery hair that seemed to flow in a shining flood from beneath the tight-fitting cap to the broad shoulders.

"Fear not, my daughter," said a low, musical voice. "It is only Father Tache, a man of years, and a willing sentry upon God's outposts."

With the first words all feeling of resentment vanished. Aline even smiled as she glanced into the twinkling eyes that shone from the ruddy face of the old priest.

"Come in by the fireside," she invited. "I did not know. I saw only that you were a white man, and it startled me at first."

The priest entered, stamping and dusting the snow from his clothing. Removing his cap, he beat it sharply against his knee.

"Ah, 'tis a wild night, my daughter. Truly the good God sent us to these people in the nick of time, for had we not arrived before the storm struck I shudder to think of what men would have found here upon the shore of Laird Lake in the spring."

"They were in a bad way," answered

the girl. "Several died before we arrived."

As she spoke a gleam of the firelight fell full upon her face, and Father Tache, with the words of a reply trembling upon his lips, started backward, his hand gripping uncertainly at the throat of his great fur coat. He stared, wide-eyed, as a man stares who looks upon that which cannot be, and he moistened his lips with his tongue.

Aline glanced with surprise into the face of the priest, who composed himself with an effort.

"Ah, yes," he repeated mechanically the girl's words. "Several have died, and may the good God rest their souls! But tell me, my daughter, have you come far? You will pardon an old man's agitation, and also his inquisitiveness. To come suddenly face to face with—with one so young and so beautiful in this far corner of the wilderness——"

He paused, and Aline smiled. "But this far corner of the wilderness is my home. I live only fifty miles to the southward."

"And you have always lived here?" asked the old man eagerly.

The girl considered. "I do not think I have lived there always. Long ago—it comes to me sometimes as a dream—a big, log stockade,—a store where many Indians came to trade, and then a long canoe journey, when for days and days and days we traveled upon rivers, and at night camped in a tent. I do not know, maybe it is only a dream. Maybe, after all, I have lived all my life on Barrier Lake."

"And your name?" asked the priest. "You have not yet told me your name."

"Aline Chaudiare."

The priest nodded, and for a long time sat silently staring into the fire. The girl noted that his hands were clenched, that the merry twinkle was gone from the gray eyes, and that his thoughts seemed far away. It was a mood that coincided with her own, and her thoughts, too, drifted far from the shores of Laird Lake. As the storm roared and tore at the frail walls of the tepee, she wondered whether Burke

had reached Chaudiere House in safety, or had there been some delay and had the storm caught him in the timberless waste of the Lillimuit? The suspense was terrible. There were moments when it seemed unbearable and that her brain must give way to the strain of it. Then her thoughts would return to beat against the invisible barrier that must forever separate her life from the life of the man she loved. The torture of this realization was greater even than the torture of her anxiety for Burke's present welfare—for, in all probability, he would win through in safety, while from the accident of her birth there was no escape. That was a torture to be dulled, perhaps, with the passing of the years, but assuaged—never.

She was aroused from her bitter reflections by a realization that the eyes of the priest were upon her—eyes that gazed into her face from across the little fire with a look of searching compassion. The lips moved.

"What is it, my daughter? What great thing is this that is troubling your very soul?"

A swift flush suffused the girl's cheeks. Her eyes flashed proudly. The old priest held up his hand. "Be not angry," he said softly; "I speak only from a desire to help. For I, too, have suffered."

Something in the expression of the kindly face, the soothing tone of the voice, and the look of humility and compassion in the sad eyes made the girl instantly ashamed of her swift flash of anger.

"Forgive me, father," she said in a voice low with contrition. "I—I did not know—I did not understand."

"It is nothing. The secret of your soul is your soul's secret. I only sought to ease the pain. A little word sometimes, a look, may serve to lighten the burden that seems at times too grievous to be borne."

What prompted her Aline never knew, but while the blizzard raged without she sat upon the robe by the side of the smoky fire and laid bare

the secret of her heart to the ears of the listening priest.

The story was not long. "And so, she concluded, "not only am I a half-breed, but even a worse stigma may attach to me. I know the ways of the Northland, and I am not sure that my father and the Indian woman who was my mother were married." She ceased speaking, and glanced up into the man's face. Once more the swift flush mounted to her cheeks, and the brown eyes flashed. The priest was smiling, and the little gray eyes were twinkling into her own. He was mocking her—was seeking by means of laughter to quiet the tempest that raged in her soul, as one would quiet the ruffled temper of a child. The thought angered her, and her lips were about to form words of bitter reproach when the priest forestalled her, and, as before, the soothing tones of his voice quieted instantly her wrath.

"Ah, my daughter," he said, "would that all the world's suffering were as unfounded as your own! You are indeed worthy of happiness. You have stood the test. In subserving the desire of your heart to remain at Chaudiere House and welcome the return of your lover, to the stern duty of carrying food to a starving people, you have earned the happiness which is to be yours."

"Happiness—that is to be mine!" cried the girl, staring, wide-eyed, into the face of the priest.

"Aye, the happiness that is to be yours. Concerning the Indian woman with whom Gaston Chaudiere lived after he disappeared from the haunts which once knew him, I know nothing—nor do I care. In your veins flows no drop of Indian blood. You are the daughter of Gaston Chaudiere and of Aline MacDonald, who was his wife, and who died two weeks after your birth. On the word of God I swear it, and the facts are upon the records at Long Lake Post. I speak of my own personal knowledge, for I was at her burial and at your christening, both of which offices were performed by the good Father Lapré, long dead. Why

Gaston has seen fit to keep this a secret from you I do not know. My judgment is as good as his. I owe him no consideration. And, in my judgment, you have the *right* to know!"

"You call him Gaston!" said the girl, scarcely able to believe her ears. "You knew my father very well?"

"He is my brother," answered the man shortly.

The girl leaped to her feet, and stood before the white-haired priest, who remained seated upon his robe. Her hands gripped his shoulders, and the brown eyes bored into eyes of gray with soul-searching intensity.

"Is this true," she cried, "what you have told me? That I am not the daughter of Neomwe? Is it true that my mother was white, and that I am not a—*a breed?*"

The gray eyes met unflinchingly the piercing gaze of the brown. "It is true," he answered gently. "Before God I swear it, and at Long Lake Post are the records."

With a low cry the girl sank to the robe at his side, and for many minutes the low sound of her sobbing blended with the roar of the storm. After a time the sobs ceased, and Aline's eyes once more sought the priest's.

"My father is a strange man. He has never spoken to me of you, nor of—my mother. Nor has he once mentioned the name of any place nor any person he had known before he came to Chaudiere House. But he has been very kind to me—very kind, very gentle, and wonderfully patient in helping me to understand the teachings of his books."

The priest stared into the dying embers of the little fire. "And of all men, none is better able to expound those teachings. For Gaston was educated for the priesthood while I was but clerk to a factor." The quick perception of the girl noted the underlying bitterness of the words, and she sought to bring his thoughts to the present.

"And now," she said, speaking rapidly, "after all these years you two shall meet again. The moment the storm permits, you shall accompany me to

Chaudiere House." She ceased abruptly, for at her words an unpriestly gleam flashed from the gray eyes.

"No!" thundered Father Tache, the softness gone from his voice. "With the passing of the storm I shall leave for the country beyond the Coppermine, and the basin of the Mackenzie shall know me no more. I had thought that twenty years of service and sacrifice had chastened my spirit, but with the probing of the wound, the old Adam has reappeared. Had it not been for Gaston, Aline MacDonald would have been—— But why rattle dry bones?" The priest rose to his feet, and stood staring into the embers. A gust of unusual violence rocked the tepee, and the draft fanned a smoldering ember into flame. Aline looked on in silence while the man's lips moved as though in silent prayer. In the flickering fire-light his white hair shone like burnished silver against the smoke-blackened walls of the tepee. The lips ceased to move, and Father Tache buttoned the great fur coat closely about him. He held out a hand to the girl.

"Good-by—Aline." His voice trembled slightly upon the name. "I thank the good God that He has permitted me, of all men, to be the instrument of bringing into your life the happiness which has been denied to me. And now—farewell. Our ways part. We will not meet again. May I ask that in the joy that will be yours with the passing of the years you will find a moment, now and then, to think kindly of old Father Tache—a priest of the land of snows!"

The next moment he was gone—swallowed up in the storm out of which he had come—and Aline found herself alone by the dying fire. Rushing to the door, she threw back the flap and called his name loudly. But the words were cut off at her lips, and in her ears was the roar of the wind. With a shudder she returned to the fire, threw on some wood from a pile at her elbow, and as the little, lean flames curled among the fagots she laughed and cried aloud in the delirium of her joy. Happiness was to be hers! Life

and love and happiness! And when the old squaw returned hours later the girl still sat staring into the flames of the little fire.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HAIL—AND FAREWELL.

During the succeeding days of the blizzard the girl's impatience could scarcely be restrained. A hundred times she peered through the flap of the tepee to stare into the whirling void of white. Her one thought now was of Burke. Had he succeeded in reaching Chaudiare House before the storm broke? Or— She shuddered. Was her suddenly anticipated happiness to turn into Dead Sea apples at the moment of fulfillment?

After what seemed interminable days of waiting came a morning when she lay between her blankets and listened in vain for the sound of the roaring wind. Hastily drawing on her garments, she rushed to the door and gazed out upon a snow-buried world. The old squaw smiled at the eagerness with which the girl bolted her food. And, an hour later, in company with the Indian who had guided her to the village, she set out for Chaudiare House.

In the evening of the third day she burst into the great living room. Chaudiare sat, as usual, before the great fireplace, a book upon his knees and the stem of his huge porcelain pipe between his teeth. One swift glance told her Burke was not in the room.

"Where is he?" The words were almost a shriek, and in that moment Chaudiare knew that Burke had spoken the truth, and that never again would he, the father, hold the foremost place in his daughter's heart.

"He has gone," he answered, "to Laird Lake. He reached Chaudiare House the night the storm broke, and, had I not prevented, would have started that night to follow you to the tepees of the Louchoux. And again the morning after the storm it was with difficulty I restrained him from rushing off in search of you and leaving the meat

cache to the ravages of the hunt pack. Monsieur Burke is a man whose ways are ordered by impulse rather than reason."

Aline interrupted him. "When did he start? And why did I not meet him on the trail?"

"He started early in the morning the second day after the storm. As to why you did not meet him I cannot say, except that the country is broad, and he had no accurate knowledge of the whereabouts of Laird Lake. But, come, I see you trail weary. I will have Tete prepare food."

Knowledge that Burke had escaped the blizzard brought a sense of infinite relief. Aline ate heartily, and, tired out from her long battle with the snow, immediately sought her blankets.

The girl apprehended no present danger, and for two days impatiently awaited Burke's return. His trail was easily discernible, leading into the north. Several times she followed it for a short distance, but always returned swiftly to Chaudiare House with the thought that he would come by another way, and she begrudged each minute of his absence. She longed to feel once more his arms about her and hear the words of love from his lips—words which now would bring happiness instead of pain. She longed to tell him of her own great love, and that the barrier had been removed, or, rather, that it had never existed and that she was his until the end of time.

During these days Chaudiare appeared to the girl even more silent than usual. Hour after hour he sat, rarely lifting his eyes from his book. She did not notice that for hours at a time the old man turned no page. Nor could she know that he was turning over and over in his mind the words he must soon speak—the words that he had always known he must some time speak. And the time was near at hand. The moment that Burke had told him of his love for Aline, and that the girl returned that love, but that she had refused to marry him because she was a half-breed, he knew that, whatever the cost to himself, he must remove

the barrier that held these two lives apart.

He would speak. But he would wait now until Burke's return, and then, when they were together, he would tell them of Aline's birth at Long Lake Post; of the death of that other Aline, her mother—the daughter of MacDonald, the factor. He would tell them of how the MacDonalds insisted that the wee mite of a girl be sent southward to be reared in a school, and of his refusal to allow it. Of the terrible row at Long Lake Post that resulted in his leaving the place with the babe in his arms. Of his sojourn in the camp of some Indians, where he found a young squaw who could care for her. And later of his marriage to the squaw for the sake of the babe who could not do without her mothering. Of his trip to the settlements and his purchase of books, and the long canoe journey to Barrier Lake.

He would explain to them that later, when Aline grew older, he dared not tell her because, knowing her hatred for the Indians, he feared her wrath would be turned upon him for allowing one of the hated race to take the place of her mother. He would show her the written statement of all the facts that for many years had lain where she could not fail to find it in case death should claim him unexpectedly.

And finally, in the name of his great love for her, he would beg her forgiveness for the deception, and would give young Burke a place in his affections second only to her own.

But of what was passing in his mind Aline knew nothing. A dozen times she was upon the point of begging him to reveal to her something of his early life and of the mother she had never known; to explain the secret of his long silence and the bitterness that underlay the words of Father Tache. But never could she bring herself quite to the point of speaking.

There was a dignity in the man's reserve—a reserve that she guessed now to be an ordered habit of his existence.

This was the Chaudiere she had always known, and as she gazed furtively into the stern, hard features she knew that she dared not uncover another.

Thus the girl reflected upon the evening of the second day, when a loud shout out of the night brought her to her feet with wildly pounding heart and eyes fixed upon the door of the great living room. An instant later the door burst open, and Burke stumbled into the room, bearing in his arms the unconscious form of Maung. With a glad cry she sprang toward him. He deposited his burden upon the floor, and for one swift, intense moment his great arms closed about her, and his whispered words sounded in her ears:

"Thank God, you are safe!" The words seemed fairly to hurl themselves from his lips. "And I know—know why you refuse to become my wife. It is nothing—nothing! I love you—and in all the world nothing else matters." The next moment his lips were upon hers, then his arms relaxed, and he turned to Chaudiere, who stood beside the unconscious form of Maung.

"He is hurt! I found him lying in the snow! I guess he is all in, but I couldn't leave him there to die! Every moment is precious, and I must go!" He pushed through the door of his own room, and emerged a moment later, carrying his petrol stove and a can of fuel.

"Go!" exclaimed Aline incredulously. "Where—why?"

"Sundown!" The man flung the word over his shoulder as he passed through the outer door, and Aline sprang after him into the night. The petrol stove was upon the sled, and Burke was gathering up his dog whip.

"Dan! Dan!" cried the girl. "It is all wrong! I am not——" The words were lost in the loud crack of the whip lash. His face turned toward her in the starlight, and the next moment, shouting something she could not understand, he threw himself upon the sled, and the great Malemutes bounded out across the white valley that led to the Sundown Trail.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HIBBING SEEKS REVENGE.

Upon the evening of Burke's hurried visit to Chaudiere House, Hibbing stood in a patch of scrub upon a rocky point which overlooked the willow-studded river whose waters flowed to the northward. He had chosen this promontory, a mile to the eastward of the little camp, which lay well back from the river, for a point of observation. It gave him the advantage of being completely screened, and, at the same time, commanding an excellent view both up and down the river. He hardly hoped for Reirdon's early return. From his own experience at Chaudiere House he knew that days, even weeks, might elapse before any member of the household would visit the mine. Nevertheless, he made frequent trips between the tent and the lookout station, more to break the monotony of the long hours than from any expectation of sighting Reirdon.

The early winter darkness was blurring distant outlines as the man swept the valley with his glasses in a last look before returning to his solitary camp. Suddenly the glasses paused in their slow sweep to the northward and focused upon a tiny, black object that showed indistinct against the white snow of a far reach of the river. The object was moving southward—approaching him—and Hibbing, straining his eyes in the waning light, was soon able to make out the figure of a man walking rapidly at the head of a dog train.

Could it be that luck had favored Reirdon? Possibly he had come upon Burke or Chaudiere, and was leaving the country under threat. More probably the man had fallen victim to his own superstition, and was fleeing from the imaginary evils of the land of flat gold.

Again and again the figure disappeared behind clumps of low willows to reappear at a nearer point. Rapidly as the man approached, darkness fell faster. He was almost at the spot

where he must leave the river for the ascent to the short-cut trail. Hibbing jammed the glasses into their case and curbed his impatience with an effort. Suddenly he leaned forward, rigid as a pointer. The figure had passed the turning-off point! Could he have mistaken the place? Surely the man could follow his own back trail. He was about to call when into his brain flashed the thought that the man was not Reirdon, and, if not Reirdon, who but Burke? The man was mushing around a wide bend of the river, which would bring him once more close to the rocky point.

Hibbing's hand flew to the pocket of his parka, wherein lay the blue-black Webley, as the thought flashed through his brain that here, alone and unsuspecting, mused the man who had, before the eyes of all Sundown, battered him to within an inch of his life. A wicked gleam flashed in the green-gray eyes, and the thin lips twisted into a smile as Hibbing glided from his point of shelter and picked his way swiftly down the steep slope toward a clump of stunted willows which the man must pass.

Upon reaching the river's edge, his heart bounded with a thrill of exultation. Nature was playing directly into his hands! The conformation of the opposite bank had thrown a drift across the river—a drift that slanted toward his place of concealment so that one trailing upon the surface of the river must pass within arm's length of the thick clump of willows. The twilight deepened to darkness. Through the bare, interlacing branches above him Hibbing could see the twinkling points of many stars. Tightly his fingers gripped the butt of the automatic. The time for his revenge had come!

"He'll get it with his own gun!" he gritted. "I'll give it to him close, and in front, and then jerk off his mitten and stick the gun in his hand. And if they should happen to find him, they'll think he did the job himself, and they'll chalk up another life against the devils that guard flat gold!"

When Reirdon fled, leaving Burke to look after Maung, he switched onto his own back trail, and as he mushed southward his brain worked rapidly, and, as is the way of the men of the silent places, his thoughts took the form of words. "What's the use of lettin' Hibbing in on this here?" he muttered. "I do the work and Hibbing gits half. An' besides he's a crook, an', onct we git filed, he'll beat me out of my half—sure as hell's hot, he will. He's smarter'n what I be, an' they's ways them smart ones does it. If I can git to the Sundown Trail ahead of Burke, which I'd ort, him goin' round by Chaudiere House, I can slip on through an' file all by my lonesome. Chances is Burke'll wear out his dogs on the first lap. I better slack down an' ease mine along, so they'll be fresh for the Sundown Trail."

Hours later, when he camped for lunch, Reirdon produced Sergeant Blake's map and studied minutely the devious course of the Sundown Trail. "Hadn't ort to be so bad," he muttered. "Other folks has made it—even Burke. An', believe me, I can go anywheres a chechahco'can, an' then some!"

Toward evening of the second day, as he approached the mouth of the short-cut trail, Reirdon's uneasiness increased. While he knew the tent was pitched well back from the river, he purposely delayed passing the spot until the gathering darkness precluded any thought of discovery by Hibbing. Pausing at a bend of the river, he considered detouring far to the eastward, but in the darkness among the high-piled drifts he knew he would lose much time.

"Anyway," he argued, "Hibbing's back in camp, feedin' the dogs an' cookin' his supper." Nevertheless, caution bade him remain concealed until well after dark, but impatience urged him on. And in the twilight he pushed out onto the surface of the river and headed boldly southward.

Darkness was well upon him when he passed the mouth of the short-cut trail, and, glancing neither to right nor

to the left, he quickened his pace, and with lowered head pushed southward.

"I'll sure make two good enemies by this here play," he muttered, as he rounded the great bend that swept to the eastward, and which would bring him again close to the mouth of the trail. "But I got to take chances. Hibbing's nerve's broke. A man onct licked is always licked. An' Burke, mebbe him an' me can git together—if I have to fork over a share in the claim."

The man jerked off a heavy mitten, reached into the pocket of his parka, and drew forth a handful of heavy black flakes that showed dull and flat in the starlight. The feel of the metal heartened him, and, with his fingers clutching the flakes, he returned his hand to the mitten.

A huge drift loomed before him—a drift that slanted sharply from the eastern bank toward a thick patch of scrub willows which loomed black upon the edge of the opposite bank. Rapidly he bore toward the clump, in the passing of which he would leave the cut-off trail behind. Branches scraped his parka, and he raised an arm to ward them from his face. A black form loomed out of the darkness. His mouth sagged loosely open. Icy fear gripped his heart. A white hand that held an object upon which the little light of the stars gleamed dully was thrust almost against his gaping lips. For one swift instant the white face of Hibbing showed beyond the gleaming thing; there was a blinding flash, and Reirdon pitched forward to bury his face in the snow.

Seconds passed as Hibbing stood motionless, staring down at the still form in the snow. Beyond the form the sled dogs growled throatily, their green-glaring eyes shining in the darkness like things of ill omen. The sound of the report still rang in his ears, and with a sudden start he peered fearfully about him. His eyes returned unbidden to the form in the snow. An uncontrollable impulse to fly from the spot took possession of him. With a muttered curse he turned toward the bank. A dry branch snapped, and he jumped

nervously to crouch low in the snow and glare into the black shadows of the scrub, while his grip tightened upon the butt of the automatic. Suddenly he realized that his fingers were cold. He was about to slip the gun into the pocket of his parka when he remembered he must leave it with the dead man. Cautiously he approached the figure, stooped beside it, and, reaching down his hand, touched the sleeve of the right arm. He drew back in horror from the contact, shaking as with a chill.

"It's murder!" he quavered. "Why couldn't I have let well enough alone? It's murder, and they'll get me! They always get 'em! I can't touch him—I can't!" For a long moment he crouched, glaring about him like a beast, and then, with a supreme effort, controlled his shaking nerves. "I've got to do it! I've got to!" he muttered. "It's my only chance. I tried to plug him where he could have plugged himself. I've got to look, and I've got to put the gun in his hand before his fingers stiffen."

With tight-clamped jaw he reached swiftly, and, catching the still form by the shoulder, twisted it onto its back. The beard was matted with crimson snow slush, and Hibbing recoiled, shuddering. The mitten had dropped from a lifeless hand, and upon the snow, close beside it, lay several small black flakes. With trembling fingers, Hibbing gathered them into his hand. "Flat gold!" he cried aloud, and once more glanced into the face with its wide eyes—stared, fascinated, while the heart within him seemed to stop beating, and the hair rose upon his head with the prick of a thousand needles. Closer he leaned—closer—until his face was directly above the slush-splotted face of the dead man. The face there was not the face of Burke, but of Reirdon!

A sudden, shrill scream rent the air, traveled to the ridges, and was hurled back into the valley with a thousand echoing shrieks. Hibbing leaped to his feet, hurled the gun into the snow, and, muttering, jibbering, cursing, crashed

wildly through the scrub and up the steep bank, stumbling, falling, scrambling to his feet with no thought in his mind save to be far, far from that awful place—and the *thing* that lay stark in the snow.

In the unreasoning panic of his flight, Hibbing took no heed of direction. Across the neck of land he plunged, and came once more upon the river, where, unthinking, unknowing, he came upon Reirdon's tracks, and because they presented the line of the least resistance, dashed on—and on—and on upon the back trail of the man who had found flat gold.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE MURDERER.

The Dawson patrol, consisting of a sergeant and two constables, arrived in Sundown with the mail the day before the great blizzard. Followed, then, diligent inquiry of Blake and Conroy concerning one Hibbing, who was supposed to be in Sundown, but who was immediately wanted elsewhere. Sergeant Blake and Corporal Conroy, after mastering certain particulars, searched the camp, and later picked up a two-man trail that headed for the divide. Beyond the divide the tracks veered sharply from the Sundown Trail in a northwesterly direction, and as they were about to follow the great storm broke with a fury that obliterated the sign in its first rush.

The officers fought their way back to Sundown, where for four days they stoked the stove and smoked while they waited for the storm to subside. On the morning of the fifth day, with a month's rations upon their sled, they once more headed for the divide. And because the drifted snow precluded any possibility of picking up the short cut, crossed the Lillimuit on the Sundown Trail, and, immediately upon striking the timber country, headed due north, skirting the range. When they camped for lunch at noon of the sixth day out, Corporal Conroy shook his head dubiously as his eyes swept the impassable barrier of the snow mountain. "It's

ten to one they never got through. If they had, it looks like we'd have picked up their trail before now."

"I don't know," answered the sergeant. "That trail they took must have been Chaudiare's cut-off. It strikes through here somewhere. We haven't noticed anything that even looks like a pass so far. We've got to strike it pretty quick, though. We've mushed a day and a half, and made about forty miles since we left the Sundown Trail. We must be pretty near opposite Chaudiare House by this time, and if the pass is much farther north, Chaudiare's trail wouldn't be a short cut. Chances are you're right about them not getting through, but they're both of 'em old-timers, and if they found a decent place to camp they might have weathered it, even without firewood. We'll just mush on for another day or so, and if we don't find 'em by that time, we can add two more names to the list of missing ones."

Conroy grunted assent, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and snugged up the pack, while Sergeant Blake, whose turn it was to break trail, headed down the river, which at that point veered close against a spur of the great white range. As the sergeant broke trail around the point of a deep drift that slanted from the eastern bank, he suddenly leaped forward with a yell that brought Conroy, who was following with the dogs, to his side an instant later.

"It's Reirdon!" cried the sergeant, as they gazed into the rigid, upturned face, whose frozen eyeballs stared glassily into their own. The sergeant indicated the beard, fouled with the crimson snow slush that had frozen to the hardness of iron. "He's been shot," he muttered. "Must have had a row and Hibbing shot him."

As Conroy's glance followed the pointing mitten, his eye fell upon a bit of blue-black steel that protruded from the trampled snow. Stooping hastily, he picked up an automatic, at which he stared so long the sergeant growled his impatience: "Well, what are you looking at? You can see he was shot,

and we've found the gun. Now all we got to do is to find Hibbing."

Conroy handed the gun to his superior. "Ever see one like it?" he asked in a tone that caused the other to examine it with interest.

"I never did," admitted the sergeant after a minute inspection. "Did you?"

The corporal shook his head. "No," he answered shortly, "I never seen none *like* it, 'cause there ain't another one like it in the Yukon, but I've saw it, an' I wisht I never had."

"What do you mean?" asked the sergeant. "Speak out! What's ailing you?"

"Nothin'," answered Conroy. "Only this here gun ain't Hibbing's. I happened to be in the Bed Rock when Bill Weed give it to Burke. It was the mornin' he first started for the Lillimuit, an' he strapped it on him hisself. 'She'll shoot a little farther an' a little wickedder and a little quicker than any gun in the Territory,' he says, 'an' you wear it constant an' continual, like yer mukluks!' An' Burke he promised he would."

For fully a minute after Conroy finished, the sergeant scowled upon the gruesome object that lay in the snow. "That's bad," he muttered under his breath. "He was shot from close up." His eyes traveled rapidly over the surrounding snow. Beneath the low-hung willows lay an overturned sled, in the tangled harness of which five badly slashed dogs cowered against the bank. The others were dead.

Conroy approached the outfit, released the dogs, and fed them from the contents of the overturned sled. As he finished he noted that Sergeant Blake's face was very grave. "It's bad, Con; he laid for him here in the brush. It couldn't hardly have been self-defense."

The corporal agreed, pointing to the .30-.40, which remained securely strapped to the pack. "No, his rifle's there," he said, "an' he didn't carry no side gun. I wouldn't have thought it of Burke, not under no provocation. But it's plain as the nose on your face Reirdon was bushwhacked!"

Blake nodded thoughtfully. "There ain't any two ways about it," he agreed. "This job looks like murder. Whoever did it left a plain trail. Either he was in too much of a hurry, or he thought the snow or the wolves would wipe out all traces of the crime long before any one happened along." After a moment of silence the sergeant continued. "It looks like Burke from here," he said. "Anyway he's the man we want—unless he can give a pretty straight explanation how that gun got here. But whoever it was that plugged him, his trail heads up the slope yonder. I'm going to follow that trail, and the quicker I get at it the better. Can't tell when a snow flurry will blow up in these mountains. I'll take the outfit with me because there's no telling how long I'll be out. You patch up Reirdon's outfit and strike due east for Chaudiare House. It can't be over fifteen or twenty miles. And you nail Burke if he's there, and if he ain't, you light out after him wherever he is, and hang to it until you get him. This case of Hibbing's can wait."

Conroy saluted, and immediately set to work upon Reirdon's outfit, untangling the harness and cutting down the pack. Four of the five remaining dogs he found to be trail fit. These he harnessed to the sled, and headed for Chaudiare House, leaving the other, which was limping badly, to follow as best he could.

It was long after dark when Corporal Conroy made out the light that shone from the window of Chaudiare's great living room. A few moments later the door opened in answer to his knock, and Aline Chaudiare welcomed him across the threshold. Conroy had once before passed that way, and the girl instantly recognized him. "This is a surprise, indeed," she smiled. "And what brings you so far into the wilderness in midwinter?"

"Official business," answered the man, returning the smile. And the girl noticed that as he spoke his eyes swept the room in close scrutiny.

"You are seeking some one," she

said. "Is it some one you expected to find at Chaudiare House?"

The man noted the quick anxiety of her words—noted also that the brown eyes were gazing fixedly into his. "Yes," he answered, "I am looking for Burke." As he spoke the name the corporal saw the girl's cheeks blanch beneath their tan. She remained silent for a moment, and when she spoke her voice was low with forced restraint: "Monsieur Burke is not here. Can you tell me why you seek him?"

For an instant Conroy hesitated, and in that instant a door was flung open, and Chaudiare, with eyes blazing, his injured arm swinging in its sling, leaped from an adjoining room.

"Burke!" he cried. "The smooth-talking traitor! The sneaking scoundrel! I see it all now. I know now why he was so anxious to head northward, and why, on his return, he stopped only long enough to seize his petrol stove! The cur——"

"Father! Father!" broke in the girl. "What are you saying? What do you mean? What has Monsieur Burke done, but——"

"Aye, what has he done," roared the old man, "but trick you with his words of love! But track Maung to the mine! But dash on as fast as the dogs could carry him—my dogs, too—to file the claim at Sundown! He's a traitor! A worse than traitor! Like the wolf he is, he has bitten the hand that fed him! I said the morning I found him lying senseless in the snow that Chaudiare might live to rue the day he saved this man's life."

"Stop!" cried the girl, stepping before him, while the brown eyes met his flash for flash. "That is not true! Dan would not do that! Maung once wanted to show him the mine, and he refused. He would die before he would stoop to a dishonorable act! Are you condemning a man unheard?"

"Unheard, aye, because he dared not wait to hear. The idiot has spoken—not in words, but in the mouthings and the signs I have learned to interpret. Burke and another were at the mine. That was all he could tell."

"And on the word of a brainless idiot you would condemn a man—condemn *him*! Ask Maung again; he can't tell the same thing twice."

"He needed not to tell it twice," roared the old man. "And as for asking him again—Maung is dead!"

Conroy, who had been an interested listener, broke in: "I guess the idiot was right. There was him an' another all right, an' we found the other froze hard as iron back on the river with a bullet hole in his face an' Burke's gun layin' by his side."

"You, too!" cried the girl, whirling upon the corporal. "You are fools—fools both of you! 'Deceiver—thief—murderer!'" She burst into a loud laugh, a laugh that rang wildly through the raftered room and terminated in a torrent of violent sobs.

"Aye, murderer!" echoed Chaudiare. "It is all of a piece. What more natural than he should murder any one who stood between him and the gold that is his god?" The old man, who had been pacing wrathfully up and down the room, halted suddenly. "Last night," he cried, "he dashed through that door, headed posthaste for Sundown. He must go by the long trail, for he knows not the other. By Heaven, it is not yet too late! Here, you!" he cried, addressing Conroy. "You with two good hands! Harness my dogs yonder in the corral, or rather Burke's dogs, for three of them are his and the other four are none too good. Quick, there is not a moment to lose! Aline—Aline!" he cried to the girl, who had sunk into a chair beside the table and was sobbing, with her head buried in her arms. "Have done with that sniveling! Throw some food onto the sled and my blankets and a couple of robes, and no more than is necessary for a two days' trail. Make it three!" he called as an afterthought. "With three old dogs and a broken arm, it will take a day longer. I'll beat him to Sundown yet!"

"But, father!" objected the girl, staring at him incredulously. "You cannot go with your arm like that!"

"My arm—my arm!" cried the man.

"What's an arm in a case like this? It is not so much the gold; it is the unspeakable treachery of him!" Even as he spoke the man reached for his heavy parka, and Aline, seeing he was not to be gainsaid, passed into the kitchen, pausing as she went to gather into her arms her own trail gear. And before Conroy had finished with the dogs, she had the sled loaded and her own blankets rolled with her father's, and grub to suffice for three days. A moment later Chaudiare appeared, rifle in hand. "Where are you going?" he asked, staring at the girl in amazement.

"To Sundown with you," she answered.

"You'll stay here!" roared the old man. "It's no woman's job! It is a trail that will brook no delay, and you will stay where you are!"

"Don't be silly," answered the girl calmly. "I can wear you out on the trail when you are uninjured, and with that arm how do you expect to handle the dogs? Or were you going to leave them in harness for three days and three nights? And as for delay, who is delaying the outfit now? I am ready and waiting."

With a growl of surrender, Chaudiare turned to Corporal Conroy. "You had best stay here the night and rest your dogs. Help yourself to whatever you need in the morning, and strike out on Burke's trail. Yonder it is, twenty-four hours old. I'll cut him off before he makes the Sundown Divide, and we'll have him between us. He'll either pass one or the other of us, or he'll never come out of the Lillimuit!"

Conroy nodded, and the old man headed his dogs onto the corporal's back trail.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SENTENCED!

As Burke whirled the dogs into the Sundown Trail after his all-night dash from Chaudiare House, he halted them sharply and glanced in surprise at the tracks in the snow. Where he had expected to find only the trail of Reirdon, headed westward, were the tracks of two men and a dog team coming from

the direction of Sundown—tracks that led northward along the mountains instead of following the wide valley which swept in a northeasterly direction to Chaudiare House. Only for a moment did he pause to speculate upon the identity of the two wayfarers. With a crack of the whip, he urged the dogs up the long valley which had so nearly been his tomb, and as he mushed searched keenly the trail for signs of Reirdon and his outfit. But no sign was visible, and with a feeling of relief he realized that for some reason the man had failed to precede him along the Sundown Trail.

It was mid-afternoon, three days later, when Burke paused to rest before heading his dogs up the long slope of the Sundown divide. Suddenly, from far to the right, seemingly from the very heart of the Lillimuit, came the faint sound of a shout. Instantly he was on his feet. Again the sound came to his ears, faint but clear this time—the loud-called “Mush-u! Mush-u!” of a dog driver.

With a yell, Burke started his own dogs up the slope, and for a half hour they pulled steadily, rising higher and higher, while every few moments the man's eyes swept the wide expanse of white behind him. Suddenly, as his elevation raised him above an obstructing shoulder of the mountain, he saw far below, upon the snow ice of an old glacier, a seven-dog team—a team that was accompanied by two persons, one mushing ahead and one behind. Even as he looked, one of the figures stooped swiftly to the sled, and, rising, stood perfectly still. A low whine sounded overhead, and a few moments later he heard the sharp crack of a rifle.

“Reirdon!” grinned Burke. “He lost time hunting for the short cut. But who is, with him?”

Again he urged the dogs forward. For two days they had been pulling heavily, worn down from the long, forced trail. They rose slowly to their feet, pushed forward a few paces, and stopped. Burke glanced at them in dismay, and, seizing the sheath knife

from his belt, slashed the lashings of his pack and rolled it from the sled. The dogs, quick to notice the lightening of the load, pushed forward in better heart. Once more a bullet whined above him, and a rifle cracked sharply.

“You’re too far away for that, old-timer!” chuckled Burke. “You haven’t got a chance in a thousand to nick me from there.”

An hour later he stood upon the very summit of the divide. Far in the rear the other outfit toiled up the slope. Once more the figure reached swiftly and sprang erect, and the next moment a spurt of snow jutted upward from a point almost at his feet, and the rifle cracked louder than before.

“Plenty close enough!” shouted Burke, as he waved a mittened hand in derision, and, throwing himself full length upon the sled, headed the dogs down the long slope to Sundown.

Burke stepped from the door of the recorder's office, turned his dogs into Scotty's corral, and proceeded leisurely toward the Bed Rock to await the coming of Reirdon. At detachment headquarters of the Mounted, he paused for a chat with Blake and Conroy, and was surprised to find the stove cold and the trail outfit gone from its accustomed place.

“Both of ‘em gone!” he muttered, and suddenly remembered the tracks that had puzzled him on the Sundown Trail. “So that’s the two-man outfit that turned north on the other side! Wonder what in thunder they were doing over there this time of year? Bill Weed will know!” He stepped out, closing the door behind him, and gasping with amazement as he stared, wide-eyed, at the outfit that confronted him. Chaudiare, deep-set eyes glittering, empty parka sleeve swinging loosely, and black beard fairly bristling with rage, stood upon the hard-packed snow. And by his side stood Aline.

Burke's eyes sought the eyes of the girl. “You here!” he cried in astonishment. “But why—how can it be possible!”

She interrupted him, speaking rapidly: “We came by the cut-off. But

first tell me, Dan—tell me all about it. What has happened? Why did you rush off for Sundown? And why——”

“It was either Reirdon or me. I had not a moment to spare. I had to file that claim!”

At the mention of the claim the wrath of Chaudiare blazed forth in words. “Now do you believe it?” he roared. “‘Reirdon or me,’ he said, and we know what happened to Reirdon! The murderer! The traitor! And he throws it in our faces—the fact that he has filed the claim! You have it from his own lips. Now do you believe——”

“No, I do not believe it!” flashed the girl. “There is some terrible mistake. If he has filed a claim, it is his own claim!” Her voice broke, and she turned to Burke. “Oh, why don’t you speak? Tell us what has happened, and relieve me of this terrible suspense!”

Burke, who had stared in stupefied wonder during the old man’s outburst and the girl’s impassioned denial, was about to speak when Chaudiare grasped Aline roughly by the arm.

“Come!” he roared, ignoring the younger man. “Come, and I will show you in black and white. ’Tis but a step to the recorder’s, yonder. Maybe you will be convinced when you see the claim on the recorder’s book over his own signature. *Sacré!* What a fool is a woman in love!”

As he spoke he pushed the girl before him toward the little office of the gold recorder, which nestled close against the wall of Scotty’s log store. Burke, his brain in a whirl, sprang to follow. Suddenly he stopped in his tracks, stared for a moment at the two retreating forms, and then his mittened hand smote his thigh, and he chuckled, softly at first, but louder and louder at the thought of Chaudiare’s blazing wrath. He watched until the door of the little office closed behind them, and, still laughing, proceeded to Bill Weed’s.

The gold recorder, a little man with spectacles, greeted Chaudiare with a smile of recognition. “Well, it’s out at last!” he chirped. “The location of the claim that has set men wild with their talk of flat gold.”

The deep-set eyes of Chaudiare glared fiercely upon the little man as he pushed his daughter toward the great book that lay open upon a flat-topped desk. “Read!” he growled through clenched teeth. “Read the description, and tell me then if you think ’twas a claim of his own he filed!”

The description was, of necessity, rather long. For the location was in unsurveyed territory, whose creeks and mountains, and even rivers of considerable size were unexplored and unnamed. Aline’s glance swept the page, womanlike, to the last line. As it reached the signature she gave an imperceptible start.

“Read it aloud!” commanded the old man, stamping with impatience. And a moment later, with her back toward Chaudiare and her eyes twinkling, the girl began to read. She read slowly and distinctly the words that described accurately and unequivocally the valley, and the exact location of the mine they both knew so well. At the end of each sentence she paused, and with difficulty refrained from laughter, as the comments of Chaudiare increased in violence from deep-rumbled growls to veritable explosions of malediction and invective.

“And now are you satisfied?” cried Chaudiare, as Aline concluded the description. “Is it my mine he described or another? A mine of his own, as you said? But, come, have done! You have not finished yet! The signature!”

“The signature, father?” asked the girl, glancing almost timidly into the blazing eyes. “Must I read the signature?”

“Yes, read it! Read it aloud as you read the other! Come, why do you hesitate? Read, and have done!”

Once more the girl’s eyes sought the page and returned to meet squarely the blazing eyes of her father. “The signature,” she said, speaking slowly and distinctly, “is ‘Gaston Chaudiare.’”

“What!” roared the old man. “What is this you are saying?” And without waiting for an answer, he sprang to the open page. Seconds passed while he stood staring dumbly at the signa-

ture. Then hesitatingly, uncertainly, he turned to the girl. "Why, he—he filed for me," he faltered.

Aline nodded, and once more Chaudiare turned to stare in bewilderment upon the written words. Suddenly his shoulders straightened with a jerk.

"Give me that pen!" he roared. "He has recorded it wrong!"

The bespectacled recorder, wondering mightily at the strange proceeding, hastily dipped the pen and extended it toward Chaudiare, who fairly snatched it from his grasp. The old man turned to Aline.

"I can't write with my left hand; come, hold the pen. Now let me move your hand—so. After the signature of Gaston Chaudiare write, *'and Dan Burke, copartners.'*"

The girl laid down the pen to see Chaudiare disappearing through the door. Hastily she followed, and a moment later overtook him. "Where are you going, father? Wait!"

"Going!" roared the old man. "I am going to find Burke. You are right. I misjudged him. I was a fool, and Conroy is a fool! If Burke killed Reiridon, he had good reason. Come, what are you laughing at?"

"Nothing," smiled the girl. "I just happened to remember that, only a few days since, you told me Burke was a man who acted upon impulse rather than reason, and now you yourself—"

"Nonsense!" cried Chaudiare. "It is reason, not impulse, that moves me. A man's actions are all of a piece. No man could be a murderer one moment and the next risk life and limb to file a claim for another, which he could legally have filed for himself!" But Aline was still smiling when the old man paused before the door of the Bed Rock.

"Wait here," he said; "I will see if the boy is inside." As he entered, Burke quit the group by the stove and advanced to meet him. "Will you forgive me, boy?" asked Chaudiare, quick to note the light in the younger man's eyes. For answer Burke held out his hand, and the two shook in a mighty grip.

"And now, tell me," asked the old man hurriedly, "why did you kill Reiridon?"

"Kill Reiridon!" exclaimed Burke, staring at him in astonishment. "I did not kill Reiridon. The last I saw of Reiridon was when he pulled out and left me to take Maung to Chaudiare House alone. Why do you think I killed Reiridon?"

"Conroy, of the Mounted, came to Chaudiare House the night after your flying visit. He is following now on the Sundown Trail. He said they found Reiridon on the river. He has been murdered, and they found your gun beside him."

"My gun!" cried Burke, his face growing suddenly grave. "Why, I lost it on my last trip to Sundown."

"They can't prove you killed him, if you didn't," said Chaudiare reassuringly. "But run along now; there is somebody waiting for you outside. I must talk with Bill Weed."

A moment later Burke faced the girl upon the trampled snow of Sundown's single thoroughfare. A group of miners approached from the direction of Scotty's store, and taking her gently by the arm, Burke turned up the valley upon the trail to the divide.

"And now, Aline," he whispered, as a turn of the trail blotted the clustered cabins of Sundown from view, "tell me you will be my wife. I love you, darling. I know that you love me. And I know—I think I know—why you said you cannot marry me." Her face was turned from him, and Burke felt the arm within his tremble.

"Why," she asked softly, "do you think I said that?"

"Is it because—your mother was an Indian?" The girl nodded without speaking. "But, Aline, dear," he cried, striving to look into her eyes, "what possible difference can it make? It is you I love! Just you—you—you! And in all the world our love is the only thing worth living for!" He suddenly drew away from her. "Aline," he cried in a voice that brought her eyes to his face in alarm, "you do not

think—you do not believe that I murdered Reirdon?"

"No," she answered, with her brown eyes upon his own. "I do not. If you killed a man, I know you were in the right. I said so from the first."

The next moment she was struggling to free herself from his encircling arms, but her puny struggles were useless, and in her ears sounded his whispering voice. "Tell me," he pleaded, "tell me that you, too, know that in all the world the only thing worth living for is our love!"

"But that night," she parried, "you said you would never marry an Indian—not even a—a breed."

His arms tightened about her. "I was a fool!" he cried. "I did not know the meaning of love—the all-compelling power of it!"

"And you would marry me, now that you have learned I am——"

"I will marry you no matter who you are. What do I care? You are *you*! You are mine! I love you!"

"But why did you not wait that night when I called you? I had something very important—very wonderful—to tell you."

"Tell me now," cried Burke. "Don't you see, darling, that I couldn't, that Reirdon already had the start, and that every minute counted if I was to save your father's mine. Tell me what is this wonderful thing."

And there on the trail, while the shadow of the mountains lengthened to include the whole width of the valley, the girl told of her meeting with Father Tache in the tepee of the Louchoux. "And I believe that he spoke the truth," she concluded, "for I looked into his eyes as he talked. But at Long Lake Post are the records."

"And there they'll stay!" exclaimed Burke, as they approached through the gathering darkness the twinkling lights of Sundown. "I have you, and the records may remain where they are!"

Two days later, Corporal Conroy rushed into Sundown at the head of his four worn dogs. His first move was to place Burke formally under arrest, and, because Sundown had no jail,

the prisoner was allowed liberty upon his own recognizance, being restricted only to the confines of the camp until the arrival of Sergeant Blake, who would undoubtedly take him on to Dawson.

The arrest of Burke furnished sole topic of conversation in Sundown. Old sour doughs treated him as an equal. And mention of his name called forth deep-growled oaths of approval. He had won his place among the meat eaters, and not a man in the camp believed him guilty of murder.

Thus it was that when some one burst open the door of the Bed Rock and announced that the police dog train, with Blake driving, was tearing down the trail, the crowd rushed to the door as one man. A few moments later, Corporal Conroy saluted his superior in the center of a circle of interested spectators.

"Did you get Burke?" asked the sergeant. Conroy nodded, and Blake continued, with scarcely a pause: "I followed the trail from the point where we found Reirdon's body, and Lord, how he rushed! Traveled light, without even a pack. It took me two days with the dogs to cover the ground he must have traveled in a night. Up the river, across ridges and beaver meadows, clawing up the side of steep valleys, and pitching down into valleys again, until at last the trail held to a narrow valley that ended in a three-hundred-foot wall of solid rock. For half a mile, as I rushed toward the head of the valley, I wondered how he had got out, and then, right at the end, I saw where he had crawled under a ledge of rock. I followed." The officer's eyes fastened upon Chaudiere, who stood well in the front of the crowd. "And there, in a chamber at the end of a forty-foot passage, I found him—the man that murdered Reirdon!"

Conroy, who had listened, with his eyes upon the sergeant's face, gasped. "But, sarge!" he cried. "He's—he's here!"

Blake ignored the interruption. "The man that murdered Reirdon," he an-

swered, "is lying there yet on the floor of the cave. His two hands are stretched out before him. And his frozen fingers are grip-locked around a little black pile of flat gold! The man's name was Hibbing!"

An intense hush had fallen upon the crowd. Not a man moved, until suddenly Conroy cleared his throat huskily: "But Burke—what about the gun?"

The sergeant turned his eyes upon his subordinate. "It ain't the man that *owns* the gun; it's the man that *uses* it that's the murderer! Turn Burke loose!"

"It looks like you come a little too late to turn him *plumb* loose, sarge," drawled Bill Weed, who, standing beside Chaudiere, had been an interested listener. He pointed across the ravine, where, arm in arm, Burke and Aline were approaching along a winding trail. "Burke, he's be'n sentenced for life!"

He paused abruptly, and stared into the sergeant's face. "An' that reminds me——" he ejaculated, after which he seized the sergeant's arm in a mighty grip. "D'you say, sarge, that Hibbing was *dead*?"

"Yes," answered Blake. "He is dead."

Without a word, Bill Weed started swiftly up the trail. A moment later he met Burke, who was returning with Aline from the cabin where she had found lodging with Kit.

"Where you going in such tearing hurry, Bill?" asked the younger man with a grin.

"Who, me?" asked Weed as he paused directly before the two. "I'm a-goin' up fer to pay a call on th' *Widder* Hibbing!"

And Burke, after a searching look into his friend's eyes, grinned again. "Good luck!" he exclaimed, extending his hand. "We're for you!"

IRRITATED INTO TELLING THE TRUTH

CHARLES HOWELL, the artist, who has made a reputation for himself by his work in illustration for magazines and advertising matter, lives in New York a few doors from a wealthy sausage maker whom he dislikes. The dispenser of sausage had asked Howell time and again for a good, illustrated motto for his sausage business.

One afternoon they went uptown in the same subway car. Howell was worn out and irritable.

"Can't you think of something for a good motto for my——" began the sausage magnate.

"Yes," replied Howell grimly. "I could fix you up quite a fine one."

"What is it?" asked the sausage man.

"'Love me, love my dog,'" Howell concluded the conversation.

G O B I

By Will Levington Comfort

A NOVEL IN TWO PARTS

THE story of a strange meeting of two Americans on the edge of the Great Gobi Desert in China and an unforgettable plunge into the heart of that vast terror-inspiring region which men say is "as dead as the moon."

Read the first part in the May 20th POPULAR.

O Upright Judge

By Clyde Bruckman

Slowing up "Speed" Harris, who led the league in batting and home runs and triples and everything else. A night at the theater was responsible—that and the merciless decision of Judge Potts that followed. A story of the Pacific Coast League

IT had been raining all night, and when there wasn't no signs of it weakening any at noon they called the game off. That's what started the whole thing. I ain't saying we wasn't poisoned with luck, because we was; but if the weather man hadn't cut loose with that young flood there'd been a different story to tell here, and I guess the people up in Frisco would be a whole lot happier right now than they are, especially one Judge James Augustus Potts.

It all came about in the last week of the season out here in our league. We was riding along so far in front when the last month rolled around that we looked like a ten-to-one shot. Then the Seals went crazy and won eleven in a row while we was having a tough time pulling out half our games. The first thing we knew the Seals was on top of us, and going so fast they didn't even raise any dust. Every time we had a chance to cop a game and gain a few points some of our pitchers would get cramps in the head or develop acute wildness and drop a tough one for us. If Jake had kept a gun on the bench them days, there'd been a lot of dead pitchers hauled out of the park, and they'd never had the nerve to pinch Jake for killing them, either. Not if the officers had seen them pitchers work.

We kept coming and going, battling the Seals every step of the way down home stretch until the last week of the season blew around, with the luck of the schedule stacking us up against

them Seals for a seven-game series on their lot. The club that grabbed four of them seven games took the old flag; that's how close we was.

Our club got into Frisco on Monday, and that's where the weather man got in his licks. He turned on the rain Monday night, and kept it running right up to Tuesday noon, when they called off the game and fixed up a double-header for Saturday. We was all in the lobby of the Continental Hotel, waiting for the final word.

"Not a chance," says Jake Gowery, our manager. "They've slipped us a double-header for Saturday afternoon. Make your time your own, but keep off the third rail."

"Let's have a game in my room," says Jitney Harper. "Want to set in, Steve?"

"Nope," I says. "You porch climbers got my wad on the train. I ain't used to playin' with a rubber deck."

"How about a little show?" asks Speed Harris.

"That listens well," says I. "Where to?"

"Let's ask the clerk."

The clerk told us that the Gayety had on a nifty show, so we decided to blow down there. Speed wouldn't have nothing but seats in the front row. You'd thought he was nearsighted or something. They stalled around quite a while before the curtain went up, but the show was worth the wait. It was one of them musical comedies where the girls don't have no more on 'em than old Dave Hauger's got on his fast

ball. There was a couple of good comedians mixed in with the bunch, and they made the show a scream.

The bill was split in two sections so's the people with thirsts would have a chance to sneak out and tip over a few. Speed and I stuck to our seats and waited for developments. I never suspected then that they'd be the kind of developments they was.

When the second section got under way business started to pick up. Them chorus girls began doing a lot of extra leaps and bounds that was never called for in their stunts, and there was a lot of "ahs" and "ohs" being said that wasn't included in the regular program. The girls in them sacrifice-hit clothes was jumping about like they was shot, and the song they was singing wobbled and broke like a curve ball until every one in the house was noticing it. The birds up in the Alps was jeering and giving catcalls that made life anything but soft for them poor suckers up there behind the lights. Some of the girls gave it up as a bum job and ran off the stage. I saw one dame give us an awful look, and it didn't take no mind reader to tell that she was sore clean through. She gave us a couple of more hot looks, and then beat it off into the wings. The show was developing into a riot by this time, and I was laughing so hard I didn't notice a gent standing in the aisle right next to my seat. He must've been there two or three minutes when all at once he reached out and yanked Speed out of his seat. The curtain banged down, and the whole house was in an uproar.

"Come along with me an' don't make no fuss or I'll bust you one!" says the stranger, showing Speed his badge.

"I—I—I——" Speed started to say something, but when he opened his mouth a handful of bird shot fell on the floor; he'd been flipping them shot at the girls, flipping them from his teeth with a quill toothpick. I'll say he could shoot farther and harder and truer than any shot putter I ever saw, and when they hit you it was worse than having a bee—a big bee—sit down on you.

"I had your number," says the detective. "One of the girls saw you loadin' up. You ought to get out by New Year's if you're lucky."

He led Speed out of the show, and I followed, while some bird came out on the stage and announced that the show would start again as soon as the house quieted down. Who cared?

Outside, the manager of the theater was raving. He wanted Speed hung, shot, and fried in oil. The detective told him to cool off and save his charges until he got to the station. I told the detective that I was a friend of Speed's, and would go along and get him out of soak if there was any chance. He said that was fair enough, so I rode in the wagon along with Speed, the detective, and the manager of the theater. The detective took us to the station and had Speed up before Police Judge James Augustus Potts.

This looked like a ray of sunshine and hope, because Potts was out to the ball games nearly every day and was a baseball nut. I'd seen him before, but he didn't seem so cheerful this time, and, judging from his looks, you'd thought he had a disposition like a crosscut saw.

"What's the charge?" he asks.

"Creating a disturbance in the Gayety Theater, your honor," says the detective.

"Disturbance!" yells the show manager. "It was a riot. He broke up the show and made a joke out of my play. Why, he ——"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute!" says Potts. "Explain the case, Evans."

Evans explained it, and I knew right from the start that Speed wouldn't get none of the breaks from that guy. While he was spilling his story to the judge I nudged Speed and told him to let his honor know who he was. I figured that if Potts was a good baseball fan he'd let Speed down easy when he found out who he was. That's where I pulled a bone that made Merkle look like Solomon. I overlooked one thing; the judge was a fan all right, but I forgot to figure that he was a home fan who'd give his right arm to

see them Seals grab off the flag. That's where I made my boot.

"What's your name?" asks the judge.

"Charles Harris. They call me 'Speed.'"

"I think you're going to slow up for a while," says Potts. "What's your trade?" he asks, just as if he didn't know.

"Ball player with the Eagles in the Coast League."

"So you're the Speed Harris that's leading the league in batting and home runs and triples and everything else?" says Potts.

"That's me! I also lead in stolen bases. I've swiped seventy-four so far."

"Anybody that steals that much ought to be locked up," says Potts. "Have you had a vacation this summer?"

"Nope. I ain't had no chance, your honor."

"Well, you're going to take one for thirty days. I suppose you think because you're Speed Harris you could get away with this stuff. I'm tired of having rowdy ball players tearing up the town, and I'm going to make an example of you, even if you are the star of the league. I wouldn't care if you was Alexander the Great or Ty Cobb; it wouldn't make any difference with me. Nobody can get away with that kind of stuff while I'm on the police bench in this city. Think it over. You've got a month to do it in."

I found out afterward that the very reason why Judge Potts stuck Speed in the cooler was because he was the best player on our club. He wanted them Seals to win the flag, and he knew that the surest way to cinch it was to stick Speed where he couldn't even root for us. I also found out that the judge dropped down to the University Club that night and lifted a few with some close friends of his, and he was three-cheering himself all over the place because of what he'd done. The judge felt so sure of the series that he even wanted to bet on the Seals to win. Every one that knows him says that he wouldn't bet on nothing unless the numbers was hung up. He was so tight

he could carry an armful of eels across Niagara Falls on a tight wire and never drop one.

I guess he must've got light in the head that night, because a fellow that was there told me that he offered to bet five hundred bucks that the Seals would cop. He hadn't no more and got the words out of his mouth when a young fellow, who'd been standing at the bar, took him up and covered the five hundred. They put it in the hands of the bartender, and agreed to meet there Sunday night and pay off.

While the judge was out getting pleased with himself I was down to the hotel listening to Jake rave. "I know," says Jake, "but I ain't goin' to move a hand to help him this time. The big boss told me that the next time Speed got in a mix-up to lay off of him an' let him serve his time. That's orders from the big boss, an' they go for me."

"But listen, Jake," says I, "you don't mean to tell me you're goin' to let Speed stay in jail so's he can't get in this series?"

"That's just what I'm tellin' you. I'm through! He's got into more jams than all the rest of the men on my club, an' I'm off of him. Wasn't it me that got him out of hock in Portland this spring, an' didn't it take me two days to square him in Salt Lake when he pulled the same kind of a stunt in a movie show? You know it was me! Mebbe I could appeal the case an' get him out on bond, but I ain't. He can stick in the cooler an' rot for all of me. Ain't it hell?"

"Worse than that. Who you goin' to use?"

"Looks like Bill Meyers. I ain't got no one else to put in there. The kid may come through all right, even if he ain't no Speed Harris."

"I guess he ain't!"

"I wish I had some one with more experience. I might try Pete Dixon, only Pete don't know no more about judgin' a fly ball than he does about puttin' submarines together. I guess I'll have to use the kid an' trust to luck."

The hotel was filled with gloom that night. The boys didn't even have the heart to play poker in their rooms. The newspaper men came down and talked with Jake until he was ready to drop. They offered a lot of sympathy and suggestions, and between the two the sympathy was the most valuable.

It had quit raining by this time, and was clearing up. This meant that we would start the next day, start with Speed Harris out of the line-up and our hopes ten miles below par. It's pretty tough to have a player like Speed taken away from you on the night before the big series of the year. He'd come to us that spring from the Moguls as part payment for Bugs Brennan. I don't know how he got out of the big show, unless he sneaked down the fire escape. He was only twenty-four, fast as forked lightning, a great hitter, and he could go as far as any man living and get 'em. He'd driven in more runs than any bird in the league, and without him in our line-up that season we wouldn't have been able to reach the Seals by mail when that last week rolled around.

Speed's one weakness was that he couldn't keep away from practical jokes. He was the greatest ball player in the league, and the worst roughneck. He pestered every guy on the club, tied knots in their clothes, hid their soap and towels and other stuff in their lockers, and in general made life miserable around the club. His worst failing was flipping them shot with a quill toothpick. He could sit around picking his teeth and break up any party that ever got together by his shot putting. He'd got into trouble a dozen times that year pulling this stuff, and Jake's patience had run out at last.

What made it worse was the fact that we had to plug up the hole with a kid just out of college. That ain't no knock on Bill Meyers or his school. Any place that can produce men like Bill ought to be proud of itself. He had come to us from Stanford University, where he'd been captain of the college team for two years and had led all them educated players in batting

and fielding and base running and everything else. He joined us in July, and offered to play for anything from a season pass on up or down. His folks had enough coin to fill the Polo Grounds, and he didn't have to play ball or do nothing else for a living if he didn't want to work. He was a regular fellow, and one of the boys. He wasn't swelled up, and you'd never knew he had an extra shirt unless some one tipped you off to it. He didn't beat it around press agenting himself because his folks had dough. He kept his face shut on that subject, and spent all his time talking baseball.

Meyers was a natural player, if there ever was one. He had a lot to learn, but he'd done most of his learning on the bench with us, because we had the best outfield in the league and there wasn't no chance for a kid to break in with anything short of dynamite. He was such a sweet hitter that Jake used him in the pinch once in a while, and the kid delivered about one out of four, which is going some. But all this didn't help none when we knew that Speed was out, take it from me.

In the morning the papers was full of stories about Speed's stunt. If you'd read some of them pieces you'd thought Speed had gone into the Gayety with an armload of guns and shot up the place or set fire to it. They all said that Judge Potts did the right thing in the right place. Some of the papers said they was sorry to see the Eagles crippled, because it would make the series too lopsided, and they offered us a little left-handed sympathy. We told the reporters they'd ought to save it for them Seals.

We opened the series that Wednesday afternoon before a full house. There was fans everywhere—on the foul lines, in the outfield, sitting on the fence, and standing on housetops outside the park. I half expected to find some in my hair.

Before the game I spotted the judge in his usual box seat, surrounded by a lot of red-nosed friends of his. He was laughing all over the place, and

seemed mighty pleased with himself and the way things was going. His friends was patting him on the back and giving him cigars and making more fuss over him than they would if he'd been president of a brewery.

I pointed him out to the boys, and if looks would've killed anybody they'd carried the judge's dead body out of the stands before the game started. We was raw meat, and if the loss of Speed had hurt us any it was an internal injury, because none of it showed on the surface. We was running over with fake confidence.

"Go in there an' battle these stiff!" says Jake, just before the start. "We ain't got Speed, so you boys will have to hustle that much harder. Say somethin' out there; keep talkin' all the time, an' keep your heads up. Don't loaf if you get a lead, an' play for that old one run. We got the pitchin'; all we need is the runs. These stiff have only copped one series from us this season, an' you can keep it one if you'll get out there an' fight 'em. Lefty's workin' for us. Get him a couple of runs an' your ball game's on ice. You take center, Meyers, an' give 'em hell, kid!"

Honk Morey was working for the Seals. It took him longer to warm up than it does to heat an armory, but once the old boy gets his wing ready he's a tough bird to beat. It ain't that Honk's got so much, but he can put 'em where he wants 'em, and you don't get nothing but bad balls to hit. That's all we saw in the first inning, and we didn't get nobody on. They didn't touch Lefty Merriam for anything safe, and we rolled into the second.

"It's tough to have to play a lot of jailbirds," says Buck Baurer, the Seal first sacker, when he came up.

"Yea," says Dutch Schmidt, fixing his mask. "I've heard that the boys from the pen hate to mix with common jail people. 'Tis tough."

Lefty got a couple buried, and had two on when Chick Wheeler came up. Chick was a hard-hitting catcher, especially in the pinch. Lefty waved the outfielders back, and I thought young

Meyers was going into the next State. Maybe he knew something at that, because Chick hit one a mile into the pasture lands, and Meyers went and got it on one of the wildest running catches I've seen in years. It saved two or three runs and took a reef in the Seals for a minute.

There wasn't no more excitement until the seventh, when the Seals broke loose again. It was all Lefty's fault. He got a wild spell, and if there's anything that's wilder than him during one of his spells it must be in the jungles of Africa. They wouldn't let it live no place else.

"About time you was blowin'," says Kelly, the Seal lead-off man and right fielder.

"You seem to do enough blowin' for the whole crowd," says Lefty. "Your head would make fine collar buttons."

"You ought to know, 'cause it's the same as yours."

Lefty walked Kelly and Duffy. He whiffed Burke, and Buck Baurer fouled out; but Beef Hutchins crashed one for three bases, only the umpire said it was foul. When order was restored there was a utility player batting in place of Beef, who was in the clubhouse, along with Wilkenson, the Seal manager. The utility player singled, scoring Kelly. This finished Lefty. Jake pulled him out and stuck Dude Holly in. Dude got the side out with only one-run damage on the inning.

In our half of the eighth Dude was up. He was safe at first when Duffy went after his grounder like a countryman and booted it. Hap Gill walked, and Harry Todd put 'em down with a sacrifice. Moose Burch fanned, and up came Meyers, batting where Speed would've been if it hadn't rained, or if Judge Potts had a heart in his body, instead of a fire brick.

Jake let the kid take Speed's place, a clean-up hitter, because he felt that it would give him confidence. Maybe it wasn't good baseball, but Jake didn't want to break up the rest of his line-up to make a shift, so he let Meyers hit fourth.

"Come on, Bill!" yells Jake from the

coaching line. "Pickle one, old boy! Pick out the one you want an' let's go! Touch all the sacks an' kiss home plate. Poor ole Honk!"

"You better be prayin' for your busher instead of hollerin' at me," says Honk. "If I had his luck I'd be president."

"Maybe when I'm as old as you are I'll be wishin' for luck so's I can get by," says Bill.

Bill soaked the third ball for a short fly to left center. The shortstop and two outfielders went after the ball, and while they was doing some watchful waiting and writing notes to each other the pill fell safe. Holly and Gill scored, while Bill took second on the blow. I grounded out.

Luck! Sure it was luck, but it won the old ball game. Holly draped the Seals across the bench in their half of the eighth and ninth, and we copped the first game, two to one; took it on a lucky hit by a busher.

What pleased me the most was a peep at the judge as I came in from third after the last out. He was standing in his box, waiting for the crowd to surge out. He looked out over the field, and you'd thought, to see him, that he'd been sentenced to play ball in Cincinnati, or to live in Siberia the rest of his life. His chin was hanging down like a chest protector. I guess he was wondering if Speed could've done the Seals any more damage if he'd been in there instead of Meyers. Between you and me, I don't think so.

The next day we weakened, and the Seals put the skids under us. It wasn't no fault of Meyers. He stuck in two clean blows and fielded his position like he'd invented the job, showing that the Goddess of Fortune was still sitting on his shoulder.

Friday the Seals shot Cy Fayer at us. Cy had joined the Seals when the pioneers came out to California for gold in 1849, but he was still the best bet they had. Cy had three kinds of deliveries: slow, slower, and slowest. Some of the boys wanted to take papers up to the plate so's they could read while they was waiting for the ball to

come over. That was the tip-off on Cy's success; he'd fool around and keep the batter waiting until he was so nervous he'd hit at anything that came over, good, bad, or indifferent.

If we ever won a game from Cy, it must've been before they started making histories, because nobody can remember it. Jake took a gambling chance and stuck a kid pitcher in the box, figuring that the kid might be able to keep from throwing the ball out of the park and pull over a win for us. It was a shame to waste a regular pitcher against Cy.

The kid Jake sent in to work was Hippo Vann. He was a left-hander that had drifted in from the brush that spring and asked for a job. He'd been a great pitcher if the grand stand was home plate, because half the balls he threw over the stand and would've been perfect strikes. Every once in a while he'd have a good day, and then the fans would sit up in the stands and bet whether he threw the ball or just went through the motions. That's how much smoke he had. You never saw no hitters up there taking a toe hold when Vann was working. They hit with one foot free, so's they could take to the dirt when he dusted them off.

Cy was lucky to get by the first inning at that. We didn't start well, Gill whiffing and Toddy flying out to center; but Cy got wild then and walked Moose Burch. Up came Bill Meyers. Cy put two more balls past the plate, making six without a strike.

"Somebody come an' hold the plate," says Bill. "It's movin' around an' Cy can't find it. Put your foot on it, Wheeler."

"I'll find the plate about the same time you find a base hit," says Cy.

The next ball was a beaner, and it hit Bill a glancing blow on the back of the head. If it had hit him square, it would have ruined his fair young life right then. Bill turned and started looking around in back of him.

"What you lookin' for?" asks Wheeler.

"I was wonderin' what was holdin'.

me up," says Bill, startin' down to first, rubbin' his arm.

I hit one as hard as I ever hit a ball in my life, but Burke made a staggering catch in center and robbed me of a triple. Hippo took the hill for us, and the fans wanted to know when the Woolworth Building was moved out to Frisco. Bob Kelly led off for the Seals. Hippo went into convulsions, and cut loose with one over the heart of the plate, belt high.

"Strike!" says Donneran, the plate umpire.

"Did you see it?" asks Kelly.

"Yep," says Donneran.

"That's all right. I didn't. I just wanted to make sure he threw it."

Kelly didn't see two more of 'em, and he went back to the pit. There was a whole lot more of them Seals that didn't see none of the stuff Hippo was throwing up there. They'd never scored off him if it hadn't been for the short right-field fence. It was so close that even Jake could throw a ball over it, and Jake's arm has been dead for years. It was in the sixth that the Seals did their damage. With two gone, Hippo walked Burke, and Buck Baurer sent one sailing over the right-field fence for a homer. Moose could've caught the ball in his pocket if we'd been on our field. And you can believe me, them two runs looked like tombstones for our dead hopes.

They still had us two to nothing in the eighth. Jake dumped the bats all over the place, and the boys on our bench started yelling and pounding the boards with empty pop bottles.

"Stick one over here, you old stiff!" says Hap Gill, as he came up at the start of the eighth. "I'll crown it."

"Mebbe you will if I don't crown you first," says Cy. Hap took 'em by surprise when he dumped the first ball down, the third-base line. Cy came tearing over after the pill, skidded, and fell down, kicking the ball so far that Hap reached second. They finally got Cy picked up and put him back on the hill.

"Ever do any modern dancin'?" says Todd. "You seem so graceful."

6A P

"Mebbe," says Cy, "but I never get sick when there's a left-hander workin' against us, though. What do you think of that?"

"No! You surprise me. You never hurt your arm when you had a couple of men on an' Speed Harris was comin' up, did you? Not more than six times this year. You must be gettin' on in years, Cy, when it takes two osteopaths an' a landscape gardener to put you back together after fieldin' a bunt. Too bad! I guess you couldn't get a bunt if you pitched from a springboard."

Cy got two and two on Toddy, and then threw a curve ball that broke down across the plate, shoulder high.

"You're out!" bellows Donneran.

"What for?" asks Toddy. "You wouldn't know a strike if you saw one on a railroad. I could get one eye shot out an' umpire better ball than you can."

"You better take my job right now, then," says Donneran, "because somebody must've shot out your battin' eye two years ago."

"I might, only my mother never wanted me to be a porch climber nor any other kind of a crook."

"So! This game's goin' on without you. Turn off the water after you take your shower. You're through. Beat it before I take your money."

Toddy beat it, and Moose Burch came up and took one of Cy's slower ones on his hip. He trotted down to first, while Hap danced around off second. Bill Meyers was up.

You never saw a kid with more confidence. He wasn't swelled up or nothing like that, but he had the right stuff in him, and the more them Seals tried to get his goat the harder and better he played. They called him every kind of a college rah-rah there is, but it didn't bother Bill none. He battled 'em all over the place and pulled a lot of good stuff.

"Come on, Cy!" yells Duffy from second. "Make this rah-rah hit one at the stone-wall infield."

"I get the stone-wall infield stuff," says Bill. "The other guys furnish the infield and you furnish the stone."

"Must be nice to know everything," says Cy.

"Sure is," says Bill. "Too bad there wasn't no schools when you was a boy."

"Was you taught by a professor of art?" asks Duffy.

"I ain't sure," says Bill, "but from what I've seen of your playin' I'd guess you got all your schoolin' from a bone specialist. If I had a factory that made piano keys, your head would be worth a lot to me."

Bill was a left-field hitter, but it was just his luck to crash one down the first-base line. Buck Baurer was playing deep behind the bag, and it looked like he would get the ball, but you might've known that it would hit the bag and leap clear over Buck's head and go into deep right field for a triple. That's just what it did, and two runs came home, tying her up. I got a hold of one and sent out a single that put Bill across. That was the only sign of a hit that Bill got all day, and it was covered with horseshoes; but it gummed up the ball game. Hippo got so excited over the idea of winning that he fanned four guys in the eighth and ninth, and the other two popped out.

The papers the next morning suggested that Speed Harris be let out of jail so's he could take Meyers' place in center. They said Bill was so lucky he could comb his hair and find diamonds in it. Part of it was luck, I'll admit that, but he could play that old ball game, luck or no luck. It did me good to see some of them papers take a shot at the judge, and they all agreed it couldn't be no worse if we'd had Ty Cobb out there in center.

I guess we'd won the first game of the double-header on Saturday, only Bill wasn't with us long. He got mixed up with Donneran, who was handling the bases that game, and a college education or no other kind of an education can get the best of this bird in an argument, especially when he knows he's right. He's always right, too, because he once said he never missed one in his life.

It happened in the first inning, after Hap Gill had walked and Todd had

forced him at second. Burch fanned, and Bill was up. The Seals had been riding him something fierce before the game, and the fans was making life anything but sweet and pleasant for him. While he was at the plate a lot of people in the stands was trying to tell him what they'd do if they had his luck and a lot of other stuff. Some of the bleacher birds even went so far as to tell him where he was going after he died. Of course, they was only guessing.

"Got your horseshoes an' four-leaf clovers with you to-day?" asks Wheeler, the catcher, as Bill comes to bat.

"I guess I could get base hits off your pitcher with four-leaf clovers, at that," says Bill. "This guy couldn't throw a ball in a pond an' make a ripple."

"You must've taken luck when you was in college," says Wheeler.

"It's a fine thing," says Bill. "You ought to go to college an' study undertakin' so's you could bury your arm. You'd save money."

"You're pretty fresh."

"That's more than they've been able to say about you for six months. That's why they're lookin' for a new catcher for your club."

Bill hung up the hit-and-run sign, and Toddy was almost to second when Bill laid on the pill for a single into right. He rounded first and saw the fielder making a play to get Toddy at third, so he tore out for second. The pitcher cut in and took the peg, throwing to Duffy at second. He missed Bill with the ball, and there was only one man in the park that thought he was out, and that happened to be Donneran.

"What!" yells Bill, jumping up and throwing a handful of dirt at Donneran. "He never touched me."

"No, but this ten-buck fine will. Out of the park! Come back next game an' leave the dirt outside. You can throw the bull, but dirt don't get by me."

"That's 'cause I got good control

of it," says Bill, as he shuffles off the field.

We might've known then that we was in for a beating. Jake put Pete Dixon in center, and Pete let a ground ball go through his legs, while three runs scored. Them, added to a few more the Seals got, gave 'em the ball game in a walk.

Bill came back for the second game, bringing the sunshine along with him. He didn't stop coming back until the last man was out in the ninth inning. Just follow along.

Slim Williams started for the Seals. Slim was a left-hander and fast, while Old Dave Hauger, who was working for us, was a right-hander that threw the ball so slow the birds built their nests on it while it was getting up to the plate. For three innings they fought along without a run coming over, but in the fourth the fun started. Of course, Meyers started it.

"Cross your fingers," yells Jake. "Here comes the boy that will gum up your ball game."

"You know," says Wheeler, "if I was gettin' out one of them dictionaries, when I came to the word 'luck' I'd just write it down an' put your picture after it. Nothin' could be clearer."

"What would you put after the word 'bone?' Your picture?" asks Bill.

Bill picked the third ball for a single to center. I fanned out while Bill was stealing second. Pete Flynn followed with a high hopper over the pitcher's head. The shortstop speared the ball and threw Pete out at first on a great play. The Seals was so pleased with themselves that they overlooked Bill for a second, and that second cost them a run, because Bill never stopped at third or no place else. He just put his head under his arm and run, and you can believe me he was picking 'em up and laying 'em down some fast, scoring without even hitting the dirt. Gilman fanned.

"You guys better put a burglar-alarm system in your ball park or he'll steal the gate receipts," says Jake, as he walked in from the coaching line.

The Seals tied it up in their half of

the fourth, and we had to start all over again. The next uprising came in the sixth. Toddy was first up, and he walked.

"It's a good thing you ain't as wild as you look," says Moose to Williams. "If you was, you'd never throw a strike unless the wind carried it over the plate."

"Mebbe so," says Slim, "but I got a long way to go yet before I'm half as wild as your swings up at the plate."

Moose didn't do no swinging, because Slim picked him off with a fast one. He was able to limp down to first, and what he told Slim on the way won't never be found on no phonograph records. That brought Bill up, and with Bill came trouble.

"Send for the police!" says Jake. "He's in again!"

"You better send for a stretcher," says Slim.

"What for?" asks Bill. "You're long enough now without usin' a stretcher."

"Yes, an' I'm a whole lot longer than any hit you'll get off me this time," says Slim.

"How he grows!" says Bill. "Lay one over."

Bill hit a long fly to-left. Hutchins lost the ball in the sun for a second, and when he found it again it was going over his head. He turned too quickly, and his spikes caught, spilling him on the ground. The ball bounded clear out to the fence, and Bill reached third before they could get the pill back in the United States, Toddy and Moose scoring.

You ought to've heard them Seals rave on the bench. Pat Wilkenson didn't know whether to shoot Beef Hutchins or Bill. He couldn't blame Beef none, because it was blind luck on Bill's part.

I walked and Pete Flynn came up. Donneran was back behind the plate this game, and Pete had been on him all through the game because Donneran missed one in the second inning and called him out.

"Put on your glasses an' call 'em right this time," says Pete. "Open your eyes."

"If I was only right once in my life, I'd have you beat one to nothing," says Donneran.

Slim got two balls and one strike on Pete. The next one was over the inside corner, and Donneran called it a strike.

"Help!" says Pete. "The blind are still with us. You ought to get some field glasses. I don't see how you got out here this afternoon, anyway. With them eyes of yours I don't know how you can see the park."

The next one was about in the same place, only farther inside, and Donneran called it a ball.

"That was the same place the last one was, an' you called that a strike," says Pete.

"Was it? My boot. All right, you're out. Thanks for helpin' me guess 'em. Beat it!"

Pete bellowed all over the lot, but he stayed out, and before he got through he was outside the park, making two outs for him in one time at bat. I don't know who got credit for the double play.

Gilman followed with a hit, and before the Seals could get us out we'd scored five runs, and the ball game was packed away. Dave Hauger stalled around and lobbed them up there, but the Seals only crossed the plate once more, and we took the game and the lead in the series, three games to their two.

I saw the judge get up and leave his seat in the box along in the seventh inning. You didn't have to be no student of human nature to tell that he was sore on the world. I wouldn't've given a smooth jitney for Bill Meyers' life if he'd been hauled up before the judge that day.

There was more excitement in Frisco that night than there'd been any time since the exposition. Everywhere you'd go there was bunches of guys arguing over the series, and, nine times out of ten, they'd be cussing Bill Meyers and Judge Potts to the four winds. They laid all the blame onto the judge, because they figured if he hadn't put

Speed in the cooler there'd been a chance for the Seals to cop.

Sunday morning we went over to Oakland. The Thursday and Sunday morning games are played across the bay, so's the natives of Oakland can see a ball game now and then without going too far from home.

Honk Morey came back for another trial, and Honk was right and we were wrong. Jake put Doc Hill in for us. I don't know why they call him Doc unless it's because he's got so many ailments of his own. He had a couple of them with him that morning, one of 'em being wildness and the other bum fielding.

In the first inning he walked Kelly, after our side had gone out in order. Duffy sacrificed, and Doc grabbed the bunt and threw the ball halfway to China, Kelly reaching third and Duffy second. Burke hit a low liner to center, and Meyers made a fine shoe-string catch and held the runners on second and third.

"Ain't he never goin' to stop?" asks Wilkenson. "Have a heart!"

Maybe Bill didn't have no heart, but Doc Hill had enough for both of 'em. He walked Baurer, and Hutchins busted one for two sacks where Meyers couldn't lay his hands on it, and the bases was cleaned. Slim Fraley took Doc's job, and got the side out without any more damage. The Seals never got within gunshot of home plate after that, because Slim was pitching for his job. There'd been rumors that he was going to be let out if something didn't happen, and Slim wanted to show 'em he was still there. He did, but it was wasted effort, because we never came near scoring off Honk.

Bill Meyers never saw first base except when he went back and forth from his position. He hit a couple of long flies, a sick grounder, and fanned once on a ball so far over his head it looked like a new planet in the sky. The Seals was all yelling that his run of luck, or whatever it was, had petered out at last.

"Must've lost your horseshoes an' things," says Wheeler, as Bill came up

the last time. "Mebbe you're forgettin' how to hit."

"I can forget a lot more an' still be ahead of you," says Bill, showing that they hadn't even started to lick him.

When it was all over we went back across the bay to Frisco for the final game. I guess every guy in town was out to the park to see the finish. It was a regular hero story, with the pennant depending on the last game of the season and all that stuff. If you consider Bill Meyers the hero, you can tell the world for me that he was some hero. Yea and yes!

Our other hero, Judge James Augustus Potts, was in his usual box, and if the Grand Cañon is any bigger than the smile he wore I sure want to see it. The main reason he was so pleased with himself was because Meyers had fell down in the morning game. The judge's friends started in speaking to him again and patting him on the back and giving him cigars, forgiving him for putting Speed in storage and forcing this Meyers upon the public.

I wish some artist could've painted a picture of that smile on the judge's face, so's it could be hung up in his home, because I guess he don't never smile no more around home or no place else. It would be kind of nice for his family to have the picture so's they could know that once upon a time he was able to smile. They might get to thinking he was deformed or something and couldn't do nothing with his face but scowl.

The game got under way, with Phil Denton, a crafty bird, pitching for the Seals, and Lefty Merriam on the hill for us. Bill Meyers didn't wait long to show the Frisco guys that his slump in the morning was just a slip. Right in the first inning he came up with two down and Todd perched on second base.

"You better walk him," yells Jake.

"That's the only way he'd ever get there," says Wheeler.

"Think so!" says Bill. "Tell this stiff to lay one over. Anybody can hit .300 with a potato masher against this guy."

Bill swung hard, and sent a grounder

down to short for what looked like an easy out. Just before the ball got to Stafford it took a bad hop and went over his head and on into left field, Todd scoring.

"You ought to bat with your eyes shut," says Buck Baurer as Bill stood off first base.

"It might work at that," says Bill. "You've been gettin' by on first with your eyes shut for years."

Bill stole second and I grounded out. There wasn't nothing more happened until Bill and his gang came up again in the third. Hap Gill led off.

"This will cheer the home fans," says Hap.

"Any one that lives in your town needs somethin' to cheer 'em," says Wheeler.

"They ought to sell a lot of one-way tickets out of Frisco to-night. You guys will be afraid to come back."

Gill dumped one down the first-base line, and beat it out. Todd dragged one, and was thrown out at first, while Gill took second.

"All the world is sad an' dreary," hummed Moose Burch, as he came up. "Well, you fellows put up a game fight at that. We gotta give you credit."

"That's somethin' they won't give you any place they know you. Givin' you credit is one form of charity," says Chick.

"What was you goin' to do with your share of the bonus if you'd won this series?" asks Moose. "Was you goin' to get one of them new mechanical arms? Mebbe you could throw somebody out once in a while with one of 'em."

"You ain't got nothin' to cheer about," says Chick. "You ain't stole a base off me since Adam had his first shave."

"Funny! I didn't read nothin' in the paper this mornin' about Adam shavin' yestereday. What league is he in?"

"I don't know how long he's been dead, but it's a cinch he died the year after your brain did."

"Then we both outlived your arm."

Moose walked, and up came Bill Meyers.

"I think I'll hit one out of the park," says Bill.

"You're talkin' through your hat," says Chick.

"I know, but it's a good hat."

"You'd make a fine blacksmith. You carry your own horseshoes around with you."

"I may start a shop. If I do, I won't need to buy no bellows; I'd hire you instead."

"Strike two," says Donneran, as Denton puts over a high one.

"If I was you, I'd quit umpiring an' just enter guessin' contests," says Bill. "You'd never lose."

"Yes, an' I can guess where you're goin' to be in about two minutes if you don't get wise to yourself."

"You ought to go to night school," says Bill. "You're workin' in the dark all the time, anyway."

The next one was right down the alley, and Bill swung from the ground up. He caught the hook just as it started to break, and sent it riding on a line to left. It carried on and up until it landed square on the top of the bleacher rail, bounded high in the air, and fell into the crowd for a homer.

I'd give a lot to remember all the things them Seals said to Bill as he jogged around the bases. Every guy he passed said more than his share. Most of it was plain, everyday cussing, straight from the heart. First Hap crossed the plate, then Moose, and Bill followed, while on our bench we threw bats and gloves around, and yelled and put ourselves in Dutch with the Frisco people forever.

From that time on the game was a joke. I saw the judge sneak out before it was half over, his head held low and his hat pulled down over his eyes. We finished Denton and two more pitchers before it was done. Meyers was everywhere. He robbed them poor

Seals right and left, and they couldn't get him out at the bat. The final score was eleven to two, all in our favor, and Bill Meyers drove in five of them eleven runs and cut off that many for the Seals with some murderous running catches. He came as near winning a pennant for us single-handed as any guy that ever lived, you can take it from me.

I was down to the University Club that night, by request, to see the judge pay off his bet. I took a chair at the far side of the barroom and ordered a drink. About eight-thirty the judge came in and met a couple of friends. They didn't wait long to tell him a few things and slip him the cold shoulder. They went out, leaving him nursing a grudge and a gin fizz.

Pretty soon a young fellow came in and offered to shake hands with the judge, but all he got was an iced look.

"Come up to settle the bet?" asks the bartender.

"Yep!" says the young fellow.

"You're damn lucky!" snarls the judge. "If this young fool Meyers hadn't been covered with luck, you'd been paying me instead of me paying you. If he's a ball player, I'm a-a-a

"You're a good sport," cuts in the young fellow.

"Don't insult me," says the judge.

"I couldn't."

While the bartender was getting the dough out of the safe the judge suddenly turned to the young fellow and says:

"You look familiar to me. I've seen you some place before this week. Who are you?"

"Me? O Upright Judge! I'm Bill Meyers, the lucky stiff that plays center field for the Eagles!"

I ain't sure, but I often think that's the reason why there's a familiar face missing at the Seals' park this season.



The Excelsior

By H. B. Marriott Watson

Author of "Captain Fortune," "The Devil's Pulpit," "The Big Fish," Etc.

You have had evidence of Marriott Watson's ability as a writer of adventure stories. He has a peculiar gift for painting the vigorous type of man who dwells at the edge of things. This is a different kind of novel, dealing with quite a different sort of people, but it takes the same grip on you as Watson's adventure yarns. His principal character—the "I" of the story—is an English gentleman, widely traveled, but by no stretch of the imagination could you call him an adventurer. He is asked, "for the good of the country," to assume the identity of another; and, anticipating some amusement, he agrees. Instead of amusement, he finds the grimmiest kind of tragedy. It is nothing less than a series of murders in which he finds himself implicated. We don't believe Marriott Watson has ever written a more absorbing story. There is nothing fantastic about the tale; it has a realism that makes the extraordinary happenings emphatically convincing.

(A Four-Part Novel—Part One)

CHAPTER I.

A DREARY fog was descending upon the town as I came out of the bright restaurant and faced the ugly night. In the gathering mist was a dampness that bit, and altogether I felt a relish for my rooms, my comfortable fire, and my books. I was looking about for a taxi when the man I had noticed at the end table emerged and jostled against my elbow. He apologized at once, and added something about the weather to which I made a perfunctory reply. Then he stood by me in silence, as though he, too, were waiting for a cab, and in that silence I turned and looked at him curiously. It was certainly an odd sensation to be standing next to one's "double." At least I had noticed that his resemblance was superficially, and at a distance remarkable, enough to arrest my attention. I wondered if others saw it. There were differences,

it is true, as I could observe now, but at the distance from which I had inspected him these had not been apparent. I wondered why the likeness had not struck him, or, if it had, why he made no comment on it as we stood there together. But then I remembered that I on my part had made none, and that we were irresistibly English and circumscribed by forms. Then my cab arrived, and I left.

The flat was very cozy. My man had set everything beautifully in order before leaving, for I had given him the evening off, with the intention of going to a theater. I was newly back from America, and had as yet neglected to let many of my friends know. It was, as a matter of fact, a flying visit I was paying, for I had still some business unfulfilled in California. And now I had arrived, I did not experience any great eagerness to plunge into the social game again. I had dined out

once or twice, seen some "shows," and felt myself rather bored by the monotony of the process, which was why I had decided at the last moment not to join the Granets in their box, but to return to my fire and my books—

Well, I didn't settle down to a book, though I had intended to do so, for the evening newspapers, carefully disposed by Collins on the table, drew my immediate attention. The political news was negligible, but as is always the case with "ha'pennies," the sub-editor had blazed scareheads over a piece of "sensational" matter. It took my eyes, as it was designed to do.

MURDER IN MAYFAIR.

Late last night the body of a middle-aged man was discovered in a corner of Friars' Alley. It was removed to the mortuary, and after careful examination was pronounced by the police surgeon to be a case of foul play. The unfortunate man had been stabbed with some sharp instrument, apparently from behind, and death must have been instantaneous. As no effects were found on the body, which had been stripped, even of any evidence of identity, it is obvious that the motive was robbery. The police are reticent, but it is understood that they have a clew and are following it up.

In the "stop press" column there was a further item:

The body of the man murdered in Friars' Alley has been identified as that of Mr. W. F. Hadley, of Wellam Gardens, an ex-member of the Stock Exchange.

In another of these papers, published later, I found some editorial, or sub-editorial, comment on the news:

It is worthy of note that this is the third mysterious murder in the metropolis during the last few months. One curious feature which these tragedies have in common is that in each case the victim has been an elderly man of substantial and recognized position. Mr. Hadley was well known on the Stock Exchange, and much respected. He leaves a wife, two daughters, and a son. The latter is a clergyman in Sussex.

I let the papers drop from my hand, and gazed at the fire meditatively. Here were three mysterious murders, and so far all unsolved mysteries. Years ago I had made an attempt to solve the universe by means of mathematics.

I was convinced that it was not by man's poor imagination it could be done, but by the slow encroachments of exact sciences. The extension of mathematics might no more answer us the riddle of the cosmos than did the asymptote reach the curve of the hyperbola, but it would take the asymptote, in infinity. Anyway, the world was founded on figures, and must be explained by them. That old, haunting idea, like the ancient creeds of Pythagoras and his fellows, had gone into lumber limbos, yet I had stuck to my mathematics. Was it not possible to devise a scheme on that exact science which would commensurate all the possibilities in the content of any particular problem? You could so work with machinery—there were printing machines, counting machines, machines with vastly more than the accuracy of man. Why not a machine to cover the limits of human action in all its intricate combinations and permutations? On that reasoning it should be possible to invent a scheme for solving all these problems of crime. I dallied with the idea, nursed it, fondled it, and let it drop with my paper as the electric bell of the flat pealed out through the silent hallway.

I bent forward to listen; then, remembering that Collins was out, half started to rise, wondered whether it was worth while, and sank back; then, on the second more prolonged peal, got up and went down the hall.

A stranger stood in the shadows, with his back to the electric light of the corridor.

"Mr. Stormount?" he said, with the mildest interrogation.

"Yes," I said, in expectancy.

"May I come in? My name's Denyer," he said in an educated voice.

I stood aside invitationally, and he entered, and then, under the light of my own hall, I recognized him. He was the man in the restaurant, my facsimile, my "double." I led the way into my room with rising interest.

"Mr. Denyer?" I said, turning on him there, and left that a question.

"Yes," he said, "I have come on a

queer errand, and I am afraid it may take some time to explain—if you—if you——”

“I can give you some time,” I said, wondering, and now with interest at full pressure.

He took a card from his pocket, and put it in my hand. I read:

MR. E. G. DENYER,

15 Slowfield Road,

Crocus Club.

Kensington.

“Sit down, please,” I said. His club, if not his address, gave him a certain standing.

“I am going as directly to the point as I can consistent with the necessary explanations,” he began abruptly. “I think you must have observed the singular resemblance between us.”

“I did—this evening,” I said dryly.

“I did twice before,” he said, with a wave of his hand. “I was there to-night to make sure. I saw you first by accident about a fortnight ago at the Haymarket.”

“Yes, I was there,” I nodded deliberately.

“And several days later at the Savoy.”

“Yes.”

“Well, to-night I made certain. There is not much to distinguish us.”

I looked at him more closely. His nose twitched in an odd manner from left to right, and he had rather an absurd aspect. I began to hope that my earlier impression was wrong, and that I was not like him.

“Mr. Stormount,” he spoke, after a pause, as if he had been expecting me to respond. “You see, I have your name, and I tell you frankly I took the trouble to discover it.” The fire fell into a blaze of logs, and I turned to my cigarette box.

“Will you smoke,” I said, “while you are coming to the point?”

I was immensely interested, but I held still my sense of humor. I don’t think he noticed the little gibe, nor did he take a cigarette. Instead he rose and went to the door, which was ajar. When he came back he seemed to have

the air of one listening, apologetic, and a little afraid. At least this is how I interpreted it.

“You are alone?” he asked.

“You seem to know a good deal about me,” I said in reply. “You must excuse me if I should like to be in the same position in regard to yourself.”

“Pardon me,” he said. “You saw my anxiety just then. I wish I could have got to the matter before. Now I must plunge, for I see that I bore you. I must, since you haven’t the key to the puzzle.”

I lighted a cigarette. “I should be glad to,” I said simply.

“I know a good deal about you, Mr. Stormount,” he said, unaffected by this snub, “and I have really come to make a proposition to one whose career has proved him to be a determined patriot.”

“You flatter me——” I began.

“Excuse me. I can put it in a few words now. Would you be willing, in the interests of the country, to take my identity for a time? We are alike.” There was quite a tense pause here, and I pondered with a curious underthrill of something as yet unresolved.

“Why?” I asked bluntly.

He glanced at the curtained window, as if it might overhear secrets. “Secret service,” he said in a low voice.

Again there was a tense silence. “Perhaps you would explain,” I suggested.

“Up to a point I can and will. If you take my card and inquire into my affairs, you will find I am a member of the Baltic. I have been, indeed, for a number of years, and am well known there. But I am a man of considerable means, a house in town, a place in the country—— Well, I mention them merely as a guarantee, and I have in my holidays adventured into many places—let us say in eastern Europe. That led to a correspondence with the foreign office, and eventually to my utilizing my knowledge on behalf of my country. I think you will understand. I needn’t, perhaps, say any more than that. I think I have been able to be of some use, and the—well, I mustn’t give names—the people con-

cerned are satisfied. I'm afraid," he laughed rather awkwardly, "I'm afraid I am asking you to take a good deal on trust."

"Undoubtedly," I said. "But I might be in a better position to do so if I knew exactly your proposition."

"Would you have the courage," he asked earnestly, "to run some risk for your country?"

"I should hope so," I replied, shifting my legs and keeping my eyes on him.

"It is necessary that I should leave England, and yet be supposed to be here. Now do you get me?"

He was certainly in earnest, and I certainly did for the first time get an inkling of what he was driving at. I considered.

"You mean I should take your place?"

"Take my place, assume my name, act as if you were me, live in my house—for a time."

I suppose I sat reflecting for two or three minutes, and once more the logs shifted in the grate, and the flame broke out. He started at the sound.

"You are in danger," I asked, "because of your work—secret service, let us call it?"

"A certain amount. It would not be fair to disguise it. I might be known. I think spies have been on my trail. But, of course, in England—abroad I am in more peril. I don't think the man who is here in my name would be imperiled greatly. But it is a matter of urgency. I saw the chance when I met you. If you don't care—well, we will say no more."

I wanted to think, and I pushed the cigarettes over to him. He took one, as if he was almost unconscious of his action, and lit it. I noticed that his hand trembled.

"I am not averse to risks," I said slowly. "Indeed I have been accustomed to them all my life."

"I thought so," he said eagerly. "I knew I had come to the right shop."

"But I don't see this thing straight through at present," I went on. "You

ask a good deal of a stranger, and a stranger should require corroboration."

"I can offer none," he said quickly; "there is only my character and standing to go by. You can find all that you want there—I mean on the business and social order. The other is—well, no questions are asked and no answers given."

"I can understand that," I said, and suddenly I had made up my mind.

"Will you have a drink?" I said, and I pushed him over the decanter that Collins had carefully set out for me. He thanked me.

"You have decided?" he said, with his hands on the glass, and again I noticed that it trembled.

"Yes, I must drink success to my new career," I said lightly.

When I come to a conclusion I feel that there is no further need to worry. I never go back. I suppose it is fatalism. I felt no desire to go back now. He drank.

"I am glad I judged my man correctly," he said rather softly, "but it is part of my business to guess characters. I gathered something about you. You have been back three weeks from the Pacific coast."

"Yes, it is your business, I suppose, and an amusing one, too, I should say." I examined him more carefully. He was about my own age, say thirty-seven, but may have been a year or two older, and there was a nervous twitching of his face. "What do you want me to do?" I asked.

"Live as you will. I only want it to be known I'm here. I'm out of business, so there's nothing to concern you there."

"It would have been rather amusing making an interesting mess of it," I said.

"I have friends, some of whom it would be desirable to avoid. There is always my place in Heatley, where I am not well known. I have had it only a year, and have been down week-ends."

"Servants?" I queried, with the fascination of the game on me.

"I engaged them newly yesterday,

both in town and at Heatley. There will be no trouble there."

I laughed aloud at the grotesque bravado of it all. It was a "lark," and I was an undergraduate again.

"As for money," he said, "of course you can't draw in my name, but I can arrange to-morrow to have a sum transferred into any account you please—"

I held up my hand. "Money doesn't enter," I interrupted. "I'm out for sport. I've money enough to pay for my sport."

From the expression of his face I saw that he had known this. It had been a formal offer. Somehow I didn't exactly like my "double" at that moment, and I did not fancy being like him, as the phrase runs—I didn't even know that I fancied being *him* for a short time. But, as I have said, I never draw back, and I am not precipitate. I had gently, slowly, accommodately approached the edge, but when my mind was deliberately made up I had jumped over.

"Anything more?" I asked.

He sat, musing. He seemed more at his ease. I suppose he was handsome since—but I am forgetting myself.

"Any complications—special warnings?" I asked.

"No," he said, looking at me, but as if with a little reservation. "I will leave all the necessary information in writing in my bureau to-morrow. You can come to-morrow?" I nodded. "It is obvious we mustn't be seen together. By the way, I will leave you keys—of the house and of the bureau."

"What time?" I asked.

"I will finish what I have to do in the morning, and go out to lunch at my club. I shan't go back."

"Very well. Enter Mr. Denyer, substitute, at four o'clock. Please tell your servants to expect me to tea. I shall have a good deal to look into, and I rather fancy I shall have a long evening at it."

He nodded and rose. "You have put me under a real obligation, Mr.

Stormount," he said, "and I may say—certain important people also."

"That's all right," I said. "I'm in it for fun. I know nothing of important people. But it will be amusing to look on at life from another angle. I'm leaving for New York to-morrow."

He laughed. He was quick and alert enough in the wit to pick up ideas. I went to the door with him. The fog, lying thick upon the town, had penetrated the corridors and was dimming the electric globes. I accompanied him to the outer door, where the porter was crouching by his fire.

"An ill night for a crime," I said.

He turned so abruptly that his left elbow struck me.

"Crime!" he said.

"I was thinking of the case I read to-night—the murdered man in Friars' Alley."

"Oh! Yes, it was an ugly business."

The double door into the street was open. He peered out. There were cab whistles, the gleam of a torch in the distance, and the profound fog deadening all. He stood for a minute or two, and I saw he had forgotten me.

"I must walk," he said suddenly. "It will be safer."

"Much safer," I assented.

"Good night," he said abruptly, and strode off into the yellow fog. My eyes followed him till he was swallowed up. And, as I looked, a figure emerged from the fog and disappeared into the fog in his rear.

CHAPTER II.

The thing had seemed more like a grotesque dream than anything real, and when I woke I gave it a stupid and indifferent attention. There was some news in the papers, and I became absorbed in it, but it oddly had to do with Balkan politics, and so my mind swung back to the overnight transactions. They now stood out nakedly as facts, and I began to resume my interest. I turned over the novel situation all the morning, and found that it distinctly had hold of me. I should not see my facsimile again; I was com-

mitted to unknown and possibly exciting consequences.

At lunch I met a man I knew who chanced to belong to the Crocus Club, and I brought round the talk to Denyer. Yes, he had met him—rather a decent fellow. He looked across at me.

"He's rather like you, now I come to think of it. In fact, there's a distinct resemblance."

"So I heard. It was that made me ask," I said carelessly. If the likeness was only as great as that, it could not be as striking as I and he had thought. But Overley was a careless fellow, and he knew me pretty well. I should have to do with casual people, for I had resolved to avoid Denyer's friends, as he had suggested.

Late in the afternoon I reached his house. It was a small, two-story house in its own grounds, and stood in one of those quiet roads off the main arteries of Kensington. I got there between four and five, and let myself in with a key in Denyer's bunch. I confess to a few misgivings at the bold adventure, but as the servants were all new I was not daunted. I tried two rooms, unseen, before I found the dining room, in which a fire was burning cheerfully, and I rang the bell and sank into an armchair. I was ostensibly engaged behind a paper when the maid entered, and, looking over it, I asked for tea a little curtly. She was leaving the room when I stopped her.

"By the way, I've forgotten your name," I said.

"Hannah, sir." Her tone showed that she had no suspicion. I knew there were two of them.

"Thank you. Will you tell cook that I shall be dining in, and ask her to make dinner at seven-thirty?"

When she had gone I plumed myself on victory so far. I had an evening's work before me in making myself at home, acquiring my cues, and getting up the part. I was served silently with an elegant little meal, and perceived Denyer to be a man of fastidious taste. Then I fell again upon my task.

Denyer had left several closely written pages of information and instruc-

tion, which I read carefully twice. They seemed to contain all that I should require for the successful steering of my way. He was evidently a man of neat habits, and had covered all the points I might possibly raise. At the end he had added a note marked heavily in pencil to draw my attention; it contained a list of the names of people whom it would be wise for me to avoid.

"These people know me so well that it would be best not to strain chances," he wrote. He concluded with an address in Paris by which any communication might be trusted to reach him, in case one were necessary. There were two points which stuck out as of particular interest to me. One was that he did not anticipate that his enforced absence would last more than three months, but of this he had already given me a hint. The other was his advice that I should spend some time at his country place. He added:

So long as I am thought to be in England it is all that is necessary, and you will appreciate that proximity to people who are very familiar with me might endanger the adventure.

That had a sound smack of reason, and, deliberating, I made up my mind upon my proper course. I was supposed to have left for America, and so I should have no trouble on my own account. Collins had his instructions, and was a faithful servant. I would pass for a few days in London as Denyer, and then go down to Heatley and amuse myself there. Of Heatley he had written:

I have had the place twelve months, and am known only as a casual visitor. You will be safe there, and yet not out of touch with London. I can hope in return for your patriotic action that you will not find it dull.

Find it dull! That was a thought already beginning to make an impression on me, and on the following day I realized the possibility with some dismay. I was by my own action shut off my club, and I dared not venture on the Crocus. I saw that unless something unexpected happened I might in time become practically a prisoner. I wandered in the West End for some

time, and at last turned into a well-known restaurant for lunch. Eating in solitary state, I revolved the prospects before me. Denyer had stated that he had some shooting at Heatley, and that might pass some time away. In a few days I would go down and explore, and perhaps make some acquaintances who might beguile the time away.

In the midst of these thoughts I was greeted by a man who had paused by my table on his way out.

"Hello, Denyer!" he said. "Had an idea you were away."

He was an ordinary, healthy-looking man about my own age, which is five and thirty, and there was nothing in his pleasant face to put me on my guard.

"No," said I, "not yet, but I'm thinking of going down to my place presently."

He exchanged a few more remarks, and left me with a nod. My eyes followed him, and rested on a stout man, who was eating at another table in rather a foreign fashion. Then they came back to find a second stranger standing by me. This was a tall man of sixty or so, clean-shaven, and gray-haired.

"I beg your pardon," he began. "I overheard the name Denyer by chance. I have been looking at you for some time. Are you Everard Denyer?"

"Yes," I replied after a pause.

His face brightened. "Then you must be my old friend's son, Everard Denyer, of Talways. My name's Colyate. You must have heard him speak of me. We used to see a great deal of each other in younger days, and before I went to India I have often seen you as a boy. The likeness to your father has been puzzling me. May I sit down?"

He did so without awaiting my answer, and I smiled, I hope, a welcome.

"I fancy I recall you," I said, "but it must have been long ago."

"Oh, bless me," he coincided, "going on for thirty years. I have only been back some three years, and I heard he was dead. When did he die?"

I considered, and called upon my wits.

"Oh, considerably before that," I said. "Of course I was a small boy when you used to come to Talways."

It was a chance shot, an obvious shot, and a lucky shot. "My dear fellow," he said, "I look back upon those days with pleasure. I am so glad chance has thrown me in your way. Your mother died, too, didn't she?" I nodded. "My wife also. My boy's in business in India. I am a little the worse for wear after so long out there. The old place is full of memories, but I'm rather a stranger and a bit lonely."

I was examining him all the time. He was dressed immaculately, carried the signs of Indian suns in his yellowed face, and had the measured manners of a gentleman. He talked in a leisurely way, and glanced about the room as if still inquisitive as to this revisited scene. I found him quite agreeable, though at first I had some anxiety as to my position. But he knew nothing of Denyer's family for years, and was even more unacquainted with his history than I myself. Finally he rose.

"Where are you living?" he asked, and when I told him, asked: "Bachelor?" I assented. "I should like to talk over lots of things with you, Denyer," he went on. "It warms the cockles of my heart to see my old friend's son. Are you doing anything to-night?"

"No-o." I answered thoughtfully, wondering whither I was being led.

"Look here, dine with me at the Oriental, and we'll look in at some show, won't you? I told you I'm rather lonely."

I hadn't it in my heart to refuse, and, moreover, you will remember that I was myself at a loose end. I agreed, and during a rather tedious afternoon "on my own" was relieved to look forward to the evening's company. I felt as if I had broken out of prison, and then realized with some horror that it was only the first day. It was not such a lark as I had anticipated. Unless something happens, I thought—

Something happens! How could I.

anticipate or conceive even in my wildest thoughts what was to happen so tragically?

After the theater, Colyate suggested returning to his club, and suddenly abandoned the notion.

"Why not come and stay with me to-night? I live on Wimbledon Common, and shall be grateful for your company. We can run down in a taxi in no time."

I don't know why I accepted, but there was certainly no reason why I shouldn't. We drove to his house. It was one of those newly built, convenient, and rather smart houses which face the great stretch of Common, and stood isolated in grounds which may have run to an acre. It was eleven-thirty when we reached the place.

"My servants will be in bed," said he, "as we are early birds. But I can fix you up with what you want." He opened the door with his latchkey, entered a short, broad hall, dimly lit, and turned into a room at the end.

"This is my snugery," he said, when we were seated before the fire. "I have some favorite books and a few other things. I—" He went to a cupboard and produced a decanter, a siphon, and glasses, also a box of cigars. "Now make yourself comfortable. I think I am entitled to a late night occasionally. I remember your father was given to late hours—used to read a lot, as of course you know. Do you know it wasn't till about ten years after I lost sight of him that I came across his name as director of the Continental. I dare say it's your insurance company." I murmured something. "That was why I joined it. I belong. I believe they're a very strong company, one of those that has no need to advertise, Denyer. I've never seen it in any paper for years."

His tongue was wagging genially under the influence of the warmth, the company, and the whisky, and I let him go on. Presently he rose.

"I'll just see about your room," he said. "No need to disturb the servants. Shan't be three minutes."

He left the room, and I took up a

paper. There were at least two columns devoted to the murder in Friars' Alley, but so far as I could see the police had been unable to accomplish anything. There was talk of clues, but the whole affair appeared to be wrapped in mystery. Further particulars were printed in regard to the hapless victim, his habits, his history, and his excellent virtues. You know the oddness of coincidence that thrusts a name never heard before into reiteration in a short space of time. My eyes were caught by the sentence, "the unfortunate gentleman was also a director of the Continental Mutual Insurance Company."

Why, it was almost with the echo of that title in my ears that Colyate had left the room. I set aside the paper and waited, but three minutes passed into ten, and he did not return. I resumed my reading, finished my whisky, and lit a cigarette. Presently I put down the paper again rather impatiently. What on earth was delaying him? It was getting late, and I was tired. I yawned and glanced at the clock. It was some time past one o'clock. I smoked and fumed, and then ventured to help myself to more whisky. Twenty minutes must have elapsed, and the only sound in the house was that of the ticking clock. I rose in some uneasiness. Colyate must have been taken ill. He had been gone an hour. I went out into the hall and listened. Nothing broke the stillness of the night save the awful clock. The hall was in a subdued light, and an electric bulb lit the stairway. I paused with one foot on the lowermost step, and then made up my mind quickly, as was my wont. I mounted swiftly, reached the landing, and spied an open door and a gleam of light beyond. I peered in, found it to be a bedroom of some size, and then my gaze fell on a figure on the floor. I put out my hand to the board near me and switched on a second light. At the same time I thought I heard a sound outside the window, which was shrouded with a thick curtain. It was as if something had fallen. Yet at the moment I paid

no heed to this, for I was swallowed up by a discovery, a terrible discovery. Before me lay the body of Colyate, and he had been stabbed to the heart.

I don't know how long I stood there, horrified and turned to stone, but at last my wits began to play on the situation. What was I to do first? Raise an alarm, of course.

Just then there sounded through the silent, sleeping house the rattling peal of an electric bell. I straightened myself and listened. There was a slight interval, and the peal was renewed. Some one was at the front door asking admittance, and presently that peal must wake the household. But not yet. I had some moments to consider my plans. Should I go down, open the door, and relate the tragedy? Should I wake the servants myself? For a moment I had the thought of the latter alternative. Then I went down the stairs softly and reached the hall. The light seemed dimmer than ever, for the fog of the preceding evening had risen again from the soaked earth and penetrated the house. I had a sudden fear. To throw the door open, to wake the household was to have the murder discovered, and here was I, a stranger, arrived without any one's knowledge save that of the dead man. What was I doing there? I was not a friend of Colyate's. No one of his friends would know me. And then, too—good Heaven, I was not even what I pretended to be! I was a stranger masquerading under an alias. No one knew how we had met by chance at the restaurant, and the slightest inquiry would bring to light that I was not Denyer. I went silently up the stairs again, and looked out through a window which was open in a dark room. Below, by the light above the door, I could make out three or four people, and two of these were in uniform. They were police!

I crept back in a parlous state of fear and indecision, and then the bell pealed again, and on the floor on which I was there was the sound of a door opening. Dared I be discovered? Whatever answer to that question

might have been given in calmer moments I could see only one solution then. The electric push button, held down under impatient fingers, was scaring the house, and I fled before that horror, fled downstairs, through the hazardous hall, and by a door into the back parts of the kitchen. I undid a bolt in the darkness at random, opening the door, felt the damp of the November night assail me, crossed a little space of what was evidently turf, and struck upon a path. The path was, from my sense of tread, flagged, and went straight forward. At about fifty paces I stumbled over a ledge, recovered myself, and, fearful lest my retreat should be overheard, went on more stealthily. I descended some stone steps, and then emerged upon what was evidently sward. I blundered among bushes, and had evidently run into a shrubbery. And still upon me was the dreadful thought that the hue and cry would be raised behind me, and that I should be pursued with lanterns and caught.

But behind, the invisible house was silent, as silent as the grave which it had become, and soon I hit upon a fence and clambered carefully to the top, wondering what might be beyond. It was obvious, however, that I dared not remain where I was, and so I dropped gently down upon the farther side. I had expected to come down upon turf or a bed, but my boots clanged hard, and I found myself on a pavement. The house must have backed upon a road in the rear. As I came to this conclusion signs broke out in the garden I had left, voices and flashing lights, and I darted across into the mystery of the roadway ahead. Suddenly a light gleamed out of the fog like a huge, yellow eye, and, with the roar of machinery in my ears, I fell.

I had been struck by a motor car emerging from nowhere, and my thigh was painfully bruised. The car stopped instantly, and some one jumped out.

"Where are you?" he called.

I had risen to my feet unsteadily, and, with the wind still out of me, was unable to speak.

"This you? Hurt? Sorry. Look

here, you must get in, and we'll drive you to a doctor's. Confound this fog!"

I was unable to resist, even if I had wanted to, and I was pushed, not too gently as it seemed, into the body of the car, after which my rescuer mounted beside the chauffeur. I heard their voices in consultation, and then the car, which had been beating its wings, flew along. Out of my window I could see a light tossing above the fence I had just mounted, a light and a man's head, and I fancied I could hear him shouting.

It was in a road in Putney that we pulled up, before a house with a red lamp. My friend descended, disappeared into darkness, and rang a bell, returning presently after with a man I assumed to be a doctor. This proved to be the case, and in a brief time I had been transferred to the surgery, handed to the charge of the owner, thanked my unseen friends, and listened to the retreating car. "Unseen" I have written, and perhaps it should have been "unidentified," for they were not invisible. There were two men, and the one who was not the chauffeur wore a pair of disfiguring goggles which gave him the appearance of an ogre. I could make nothing more out even under the doctor's light. He peered into my face very earnestly, and rather disconcertingly. But it appeared that it was only his anxiety to learn how I felt.

"I hope you are all right. I owe you a thousand apologies. But the fog —"

I waved them aside. "Unavoidable. Sorry on my part; thanks," and so the interview terminated. I spent half an hour with the doctor, thus ruthlessly dragged out of bed, who found only bruises the matter with me. He was wonderfully unresentful of his disturbance, tended to me, and finally rang up for me a taxi garage. The result was that I was soon bowling for Kensington, secure from fogs and damp for the time. The doctor's name was Richards.

CHAPTER III.

I confess that I had been a good deal shaken, more by the events preceding the accident of the car than by the collision itself. It was two o'clock or later when I reached Denyer's house, and I let myself in silently. Good Heaven! Just so had poor Colyate let himself in to his quiet house two hours ago! What a terrible thing had happened in that short time! I mixed myself a stiff whisky, and went to bed without attempting to analyze the situation or to forecast its consequences, and, if it can be believed, I slept not ill.

But the day brought back remembrance, and a certain awe. It seemed incredible that I had been witness, so to speak, to an appalling crime, and yet, when I opened my paper, there the facts stared at me:

FOURTH MYSTERIOUS MURDER.

With a fascination easier to understand than to excuse, I read through the account, as collected in the early-morning hours by some assiduous reporters. Once again the police "had a clew." Was it a clew to me? Or— Now it was I recalled for the first time what my subconsciousness had noted in the dreadful room—the unexplained sound at the window of something dropping. Was that the clew which the police were said to be following?

I was not at all comfortable, for I had considerable faith in the powers of Scotland Yard, and though it might be possible, with the help of Denyer, to explain the situation in case I was tracked down, I did not fancy the notion. "Tracked down" itself was a terrible, a formidable phrase. It was later in the day that a letter arrived for Denyer, which I opened without realizing it was not intended for me. I had arranged to forward his letters under cover to the Paris address, and, if necessary, he was to send me answers to post in London. But this letter I had read through before I realized. It was, or seemed, an innocuous letter to have overread:

DEAR MR. DENYER: I think as things are going it would be advisable if we had a talk. You remember our conversation some time ago. I may say I think it is necessary, even *urgent* (underlined) that we should discuss matters. I am here till Friday, or I could call on you. Very faithfully yours,

STEPHEN QUINTON.

Now what was I to do? I considered. Then it came upon me that there was something familiar about the name, and I got up, hunted out Denyer's memorandum of instructions, and glanced down it. I had been right. When I reached the list of tabooed names, that of Stephen Quinton headed it. But stay; it was Sir Stephen Quinton. Hastily I pulled down "Who's Who" from the shelf full of reference books that hung on the wall, and turned up the name, "Sir Stephen Quinton, Bart." It conveyed nothing to me, nor was it illuminating to know that he owned two hundred acres, and that his address was Linsett, Kent. But as I was shutting the volume some words leaped to my eye that caused me to reopen it. Was was this?

Director of the Wains Company, Ltd.,
Dykes Own, Ltd., Georgia Gold Co., Ltd.,
Continental Mutual Insurance Co.

It was the last company, as you may guess, that took my eye. This was the third time within two days that I had forced upon me the name of a company of which till then I had been wholly ignorant. I sat in a muse for some time, and then, on a sudden resolve, went to the telephone. I had Sir Stephen Quinton's letter in my hand. I gave the number to central, and waited. When the ring came I spoke. Sir Stephen was in, and would I hold the line.

"Is that you, Mr. Denyer? You got my letter?"

"Yes, I rang you up to say that it is imperative I should leave town this afternoon, but I hope to be back in a few days."

"Oh!" His voice, even over that distance, proclaimed some disappointment. "Well, I think you will see the matter is urgent. You have seen the papers?"

"Yes." I waited for more.

7A P

"Then it must be obvious to you that we must consult. Shall I come over now?"

"I am just off."

I heard the explosion of an oath in the telephone, and then: "Ring me up, or wire me just as soon as possible."

"Very well; you can rely upon me."

I hung up the receiver. I was burning to see Sir Stephen Quinton, but I dared not. I was afraid of him. Indeed, as the day wore on, I took steps to make my false statement to him true; I packed up and took the train to Heatley, having advised the servants of my intention by telegram.

Heatley is a pleasant village situated on the borders of wild country, and Denyer's house, a modest building, stood in grounds of two or three acres about a mile away. I gathered that he had taken it as a convenient place wherein to entertain his town friends, and because there was cheap shooting in the neighborhood. I soon learned this. The wild moorland spread almost from the doors, in contrast to the pretty, domestic Englishness of the village side of the hill. In the moor was broken land, forest, bog, and fen land, deep pools, and shallow marshes which at this time of the year were full of wild fowl and very empty of all else. I had always been something of a sportsman, and in the Western States had cultivated my prowess rather of necessity. So the prospect of the harsh wilderness did not daunt me. I foresaw I could amuse myself, at any rate, for a week or two at Heatley.

I didn't, however, amuse myself for a week even. Indeed, after two days, I doubt if I can be said to have been amused at all. There was aloofness in the air at Heatley. No doubt, if I had settled in firmly and determinately as Denyer, I should have been duly received into the social microcosm of the countryside. But emotions stirred slowly in these parts, even curiosity, and I felt sure I had to get over the test of Sunday and churchgoing before I should be passed and accepted. That turned out to be impossible for one of the reasons that irritated me.

I shot a little—rough shooting—and as there was a spell of fine weather enjoyed the loneliness of the marshes and the woodland. Winter was collecting her forces of occupation, but as yet the autumn banners streamed aloft, and hung in crimson and gold in the forest drives. Protected by the shelter of their own society, the trees kept their foliage even so late as this. I walked often in a drift of twisting, fluttering, golden elm leaves. The eye carried far through the defoliated aisles, and, take it all in all for the season, it was pretty handsome weather.

On the third day I was returning from the open moorland through a tract of forest, and the sun was sliding down to its end, but still splashed the trunks with color. And then there came up through the aisles something of a piece with the dying color. It was a fading yellow, an intermingled russet and drab, and the face was thin and yellow also, like old gold, strange to look at in a human being. He was a man of thirty or more, and his frame was spare and even meager. His mustard clothes seemed to hang too loosely on his thin body, and yet he walked briskly. He passed near me, stared in a lackluster way, and shambled swiftly off. I heard his feet among the crisp leaves of the woodland. I mention him here because I must mention him again, and this incident makes a necessary connection between me and poor Colyate and Denyer and everything else.

Next day I had a telegram from Sir Stephen Quinton:

Must see you. Am arriving by three-forty-five train.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish. I had been out shooting, and did not get back till nearly two o'clock for lunch, and this new trouble awaited me. Quinton was one of the names, particularly starred, against which I was warned by Denyer. I did not like to break faith with him, much as I should have liked to see the man and make an attempt at solution of the problems

which were crowding on me. After consideration, I wired:

Sorry—leaving to-day. Will write.

It struck me afterward as a very inane telegram. But I felt that as Denyer had warned me I might be detected and shown up as an impostor if I met Quinton, and it might be important to Denyer that I should not be discovered even by a friend. Moreover, Quinton might not be a friend. I knew nothing of him.

I took a trap from the village to Croxton Junction, some four miles away, with the vaguest intentions. I had no desire to return to London, but I thought of cities with interest. I should be lost in a city. I had almost the feeling of being a hunted criminal. The London train had come in to the station as I reached it, and suddenly I had a thought; I would go on, and let chance decide. I took a ticket to a station some ten miles farther, hoping to come to some resolution on the way, and then I hurried to the platform. The hiss and bustle of the engine was still going on. Outside a carriage I saw two men in talk. One was a tall, thin man of sixty, dressed unobtrusively in tweeds; the other a smaller, older man in more of a town dress. I saw his clean-shaven, stout face as I passed, looking for a compartment.

In my compartment, a first class, was one passenger, a small, insignificant, elderly man who read papers and never looked up, and so I settled down to think. The station to which I had booked was only ten miles away, and I wanted to make up my mind as to my course before we reached it. I had not done so when we pulled up at a platform, where my companion, abandoning his papers, put his head out of the window. Then he turned to me.

"There's something—" he began, and suddenly opened the door and leaped out. I followed, partly because I belonged here, and partly because something in his behavior had excited me. A porter was passing, whom my companion addressed.

"Man found dead, my lord," was the response.

We both walked sharply down the platform, and other voices reached us, converting the death into something more sinister.

"Shot in the heart." "Old gentleman." "Third class."

"Murder?" queried my companion, who had been transmuted into a peer by the porter.

"No; suicide."

We joined the small crowd, and looked on. They were lifting something out of a compartment of the train, and the face was exposed to me fully. It was the face of the elderly gentleman I had seen talking with the thin man in tweeds. Good Lord, was I to be forever involved in connection with tragedies and crimes and mysteries? The train was, of course, detained while inquiries were made, and my companion and I were obliged to give our names. I think my association with my lord, whose name I did not hear, was sufficient to exonerate me, so that there was no need to detain us, and, some time later, the train proceeded. I found that my luggage, which had been labeled to the station, had been left upon the platform, so that I was compelled, willy-nilly, to end my railway journey here for the present. I learned that Leston, a small town I had once visited, lay three miles across the moor, and so I hired a trap to drive me there—for no reason in the world save that I wanted to think.

It took some time to secure the trap and to get on the way, and when we were crawling along an hour later—it must have been after five, and the dark had fallen—we overtook a man on foot. I was looking out at the time, and the carriage lamp fell on him. He had turned as we came up, and I recognized the face, but could not remember where I had seen it. It was not until we had gone half a mile farther that recollection came to me. It was the face of the fat foreigner I had seen in the Café Impériale some days before when I had met Colyate. I was now in a tangle of bewilderment when

it seemed that anything might happen or be done, and so I stopped the carriage. As it chanced, we had come abreast of a small wayside inn, and that was sufficient excuse, certainly excuse enough for the driver. As for me, I stood outside, waiting, and, ten minutes later, the foot traveler arrived. He gave one glance at the dimly lit windows of the inn and marched on. After a convenient interval I followed, and he had not gone two hundred yards before he turned through great gates into what seemed a drive. I went back, called out my man, and proceeded. Opposite the gates, I shouted to him, "Whose place is that?"

"Mr. Morton Crump's, sir. Member of Parliament."

The answer conveyed nothing to me, and I sat back in silence till we reached Leston.

Leston is an old-fashioned town of small size, lying on the right bank of a river, and marking the termination of the big moorland district which begins at Heatley. I had stayed at an inn there, the Dragon, with a punt upon the river, and here I descended to renew my acquaintance with a pleasant, humdrum hostelry.

Leston was not so far from London but the morning papers arrived for breakfast, and I opened one the next day as I sat to kidneys and bacon and good coffee. The murder at Walford station was signaled in the principal page, and received in this particularly decorous journal in larger type than usual because of the run of mysterious murders which had preceded it. The victim this time was a Mr. Jonas Philway, a respectable merchant in the City, and this time the police had "no clew." I laid the paper down, and went on with my breakfast, took it up again, and suddenly set it down with my gaze riveted on the window of the coffeeroom, unseeing.

Mr. Jonas Philway was a director of the Continental Mutual Insurance Company.

Did you ever have a series of coincidences so remarkable, so disconcerting, that you were bound to find some

connection, some scheme in them? I began to feel that here was a moment when I could, or should, use all the mathematical devices I had theoretically determined were available for a solution of problems. What *was* the explanation of all these people, unknown to me, who were linked together by the Continental Mutual Insurance Company?

Mr. Philway had been shot through the heart, and as a revolver was found in the compartment a theory was mooted that he had committed suicide. The preliminary evidence, however, seemed to discountenance this idea, though it was a possible solution. As for me, I had no doubt at all, for I was growing aware of an atmosphere of darkness and evil into which I had inadvertently ventured, and which even now I was breathing heavily. Yet at Leston I was surely in a safe retreat. No one knew my address, and no letters could be forwarded. I was cut off from the world and free to follow my own devices. I really took some satisfaction and even pleasure in the thought. It was the starting point of an innocent adventure. Gone was Gerald Stormount, gone even was Denyer, for I had given no name at the inn, and my previous visit was an old affair, ten years gone, since which the management had changed. I could start with a clean sheet here, make new friends, set myself up for what I liked, enjoy my incognito whimsically, and go back to civilization and town and identity and all the cares and responsibilities involved after the three months had passed.

This was a pretty plan, and quite attractive. I began to sketch imaginary ventures into local society as an obvious gentleman with plenty of money. But I had not been there more than a week before the bottom fell out of my plottings in the most amazing manner, and with the most astounding discovery.

I talked in the bar parlor with the landlord and young gentlemen of the town, about sport, about fish, about—anything. One of the conversations

turned upon the big people of the neighborhood, and I learned much of Lord So-and-so, and Sir George What's-his-name, and Mr. Blank, the squire. And then it came upon me, more to keep up the talk than out of curiosity and because I had just remembered the name to ask:

"What about Mr. Morton Crump?" The name had stuck in my mind because of its absurdity. There was no enthusiasm at the mention of his name as there had been shown to the sporting squire, but there was evident respect.

"The Towers is the biggest place about here," said one, and the landlord added appreciably:

"The gentleman's worth a sight of money, I reckon."

"Can't keep it up under ten thousand pounds a year, I'll lay," suggested another.

There sprang into my mind a picture of the dark gateway under brooding trees and a fat-faced foreigner sliding into the darkness. It was a few days later that I was in the neighborhood of the Towers, for the weather held fine, and I was a good deal on my legs, through the forest country. Seen by daylight, the entrance to the park was pleasant enough, and the park itself was obviously spacious and handsome. The drive curled up through avenues now naked for the winter, and in the distance, obscured by a skein of bare spars, I could discern the mass of the house.

I continued my walk, came to a field path, and crossed a stile. The way ran by an oak plantation, and then through pines; finally it came out upon a tract of road which evidently ran as a public way through the demesne. I followed this for some time, and thus drew near the house. It was ugly and ambitious and modern, built in an abominable time of taste. I criticized, passed on, skirted the monstrosity, and emerged into a lane by railings, near which were old barns and tiled, ancient buildings. This was quite another affair, this memorial of our father's craft. I surveyed the scene, and was survey-

ing it when I was startled out of my reverie by a voice which called sharply:
 "Mr. Denyer! Mr. Denyer!"

CHAPTER IV.

I wheeled about in an instant, and at thirty paces distant saw an elderly man approaching me. I stood my ground, and as he came nearer I recognized his appearance as familiar—next in the instant that he was the thin man I had seen in conversation with the murdered Philway at the station.

"Mr. Denyer," he said, "it is most fortunate, this meeting. Were you calling on me?"

"No," said I, feeling that I must answer, "I didn't know you were here."

"Staying with Morton Crump," he explained. "As I heard nothing from you, I got uneasy and wrote to him. He is beginning to feel as I do. But we won't talk of that now. Now you're here we can go into everything."

He spoke jerkily, almost with an air of shame, and I knew that he must be Sir Stephen Quinton, against whom I had been specially warned by Denyer.

"Of course," I answered to gain time.

He had begun to walk in the direction of the house, evidently under the impression that I was to accompany him. After a momentary hesitation I did so, and as we went on talked of idle things, while my mind was as busy as a bee about the strange and awkward situation.

It was near the house that he spoke abruptly:

"Morton Crump is frightened. Perhaps we had better not refer to the matter at lunch. Of course you'll lunch. Where are you staying, by the way?"

I told him, and his eyes, which had seemed restless, dwelt on me for the first time steadily. "You know, Denyer, I have had the impression you were not anxious that we should meet. It would have been a mistake—a mistake."

I, at any rate, had an impression now, and it was that Mr. Morton

Crump was not the only person who was frightened. But I had yet to plumb these depths, and I made an evasive reply and followed him indoors.

Morton Crump I found a man of large bulk, flabby, gray face, bearded, and with irregular features. He was of middle height and late middle age. He waddled rather than walked, and his voice was a little wheezy, one of those incongruous voices that emerge from large bodies. He was civil to the point of tiresomeness, and seemed anxious to placate me. The three of us lunched together, as Crump's family were somewhere else, at Bordighera, Bonn, or some expensive and fashionable place. To talk with Crump and watch him for five minutes was to confirm Quinton's story; the man was *afraid*. He ate nervously, but greedily, drank a good deal more than he should have done, talked noisily and much, and kept an eye roving about his own room as if on furtive expeditions. When we rose and I accidentally knocked against him near the door he almost leaped from the floor. He was badly scared.

And as yet I knew nothing, though I was to learn a good deal that evening, and to pinch myself to know if I was awake and it could be true.

"Kerr is coming this afternoon," said Quinton in my ear later. "You must join. There will be four of us then. If it hadn't been for Kerr, I don't think I would have——" He broke off, and his face looked troubled. I had already set him down as a very commonplace man with no particular character or parts. But he looked an honest man, which was more than I could say for Crump. Who Kerr was I had not the remotest guess.

Crump it was who, in pursuance of an agreed scheme, I suppose, invited me to shift my quarters to the Towers.

"I'll send a car over for your things," he said. "It's very important you should be here at the—at the—conference."

It was the first time he had made any reference to the matter, and he stumbled over it. His hands trembled.

Whatever the matter was Crump was surely not capable of facing it. You will have seen by this time that I had committed myself to the unknown. I had honestly endeavored to keep the pact with Denyer and avoid Quinton, but now that he had not penetrated my disguise, so to speak, I felt at liberty to relax my efforts. In any case, I could not get out of this meeting, and I did not want to get out of the next—with Mr. Kerr. Later, as will be seen, the whole of my attitude was revolutionized.

Kerr arrived at dusk, a smooth-faced, capable lawyer, with clear-cut features and typical manners. He had an air of eminent respectability, and I could guess that he had plenty of decision. "If it had not been for Kerr—" Quinton had almost wailed. Kerr was clearly a man of personality and influence. I did not much take to Kerr. Apparently he accepted me, like the others, as an acquaintance. We dined, and when the servants withdrew the matter was broached. It arrived among us somewhat portentously.

"You haven't seen the evening's papers?" suggested Kerr.

"No-o," wheezed Morton Crump tremulously.

"I have them in my bag." He glanced at me. "There appears to be no doubt that Philway's case was one of murder, but there is no cl^{ew}."

Crump's coarse face became gray, and Quinton bolted his wine.

"I am sick of it," he said. "That's why I wanted the meeting. We ought to give it up. What do you think, Denyer?"

I was nonplused, but spoke as if with careful deliberation:

"I'm not sure. It's open to argument."

Crump looked at me across the table, and there was something evil in his face, something that had shaken the fear out of it.

"We can't go back," he said wheezily.

Kerr moistened his thin lips, as if about to open a case.

"It is, as our friend says, open to

argument, and I suppose we are met for that. It is no use to ignore the fact that the business has taken on a serious face."

"I've never been comfortable since that meeting in July," burst out Quinton querulously. "I—I'm not even now sure of the legality of our action in spite of Kerr. Anyway, I don't like it—and then all these things happening. Philway's the last. What's the explanation? Who is the man?" he cried.

In that moment I felt that the atmosphere of the table had changed. It had become charged with suspicion. There was a moment's silence, and then Kerr spoke:

"It is ugly, I admit. It is well we are here for a consultation. I don't know if it may be possible for us to take some steps."

He twiddled the shank of his wine-glass in his fingers, and again there was a moment's silence. Morton Crump broke it.

"There is no one but ourselves knows," he said hoarsely.

"And Donaldson? You mustn't forget Donaldson," corrected Kerr.

Quinton was biting his lips feverishly, and I was watching and listening in a strange state of excitement. What had I stumbled on?

Crump lowered his voice almost into a whisper: "There was Williams died——"

"Died in his bed of pneumonia," interrupted Kerr.

"Williams died," repeated Crump without heeding, and with his eyes on the tablecloth. "Savill was drowned while bathing—Thurgood went off suddenly no one knows how—Bryant and Philway murdered, dead. They're getting bolder. They are coming out into the open. It's getting nearer us. They! He, I mean. Who is it? Who is it?"

His frightened sentences, thrown staccato at us, culminated in a little shriek, incongruous and horrible, coming from that big body.

Kerr took out his watch. "Donaldson should come about ten o'clock,"

he said. "I wired to him, and also telephoned him."

"What has been worrying me," began Quinton once more, "is the question of how we stand in law. I'm not afraid of anything else——" He looked at Crump, who so plainly was afraid of something else.

"It is clear enough—in law," said Kerr calmly. "I explained all that. According to our constitution—for you know we're not an English registered company—we are acting within our rights. The Continental——"

Something drummed in my head. It was the Continental, then, after all. I lent my ears to the even flow of Kerr's language.

"If we decided as directors not to take any more life risks for any reason that seemed good to us, it was within our discretion to do so. That much is certain. Of course while any policyholders survive our assets must be held subject to the liabilities we have assumed toward these. But if they go——"

"They have gone," broke in Crump discordantly.

"If they go, and there is no further claim upon us," pursued Kerr, "the board of directors has the disposal of the reserve moneys in their power. There is no longer any question of bonuses or reserve for accidents. The money remains in cache, to use an illegal term, and belongs to no one. At the same time it is at the disposal of the directors, who are competent to deal with it. This was all plainly stated at the board meeting in July."

"When there were four policyholders living," put in Quinton.

"Precisely. The Excelsior, for one reason or another, let us say, has not advertised itself for many years. The board was also not anxious to take more risks, and was desirous of conserving its resources. In consequence a large sum——"

"One million five hundred thousand," wheezed Crump as if to himself, almost under his breath.

"Has accumulated, and there are no claimants. The question was how to

dispose of this sum. It might revert to the government, or——"

"Be divided," again wheezed Crump. His eyes glistened. He seemed to have forgotten his fears. "There are only five left."

"Five," assented Kerr in his matter-of-fact voice. "I thought we were agreed upon our course. But events seem to have affected the previous decision of some gentlemen." He paused and looked at Crump. "Of course we did not anticipate——"

"There are only five now," said Crump hoarsely. "That makes a difference in the partition."

Kerr's thin lips tightened. "I don't know what Mr. Denyer's views are now," he said on what was obviously an interrogative statement.

What thoughts had gone through my mind during the experiences and discoveries of the last half hour I will not set down here. I am simply recording facts for the present.

"I—I think I must sleep on it," I said, after the first pause of trepidation, decisively enough.

The three regarded me. In Quinton's eyes I could see wonder, in Crump's doubt, but Kerr's eyes were inscrutable. At that moment there was the noise of carriage wheels on the still night, and Kerr rose.

"It is Donaldson," he said.

Crump left the room quickly, and we waited in silence. Presently he returned, looking uneasy.

"It's not Donaldson," he said. "It's only my secretary, Farren, who was called to London this morning. He came by the last train. Donaldson has not come by it."

There was a pause, and then Kerr said: "It is indispensable that he should be here if we are to take any step."

"What do you want to do?" demanded Quinton almost querulously. "Do you mean——"

"There is no reason why the money should not be divided if all consent," said Kerr, scrutinizing him. "The check with the secretary's signature is ready, and only wants two directors' signatures. We can authorize that."

"Who is to sign?" asked Crump.
 "Any two," said Kerr, shrugging.
 "You and Quinton or Denyer or——"
 "No—no!" Crump broke out, and, though it was a chill night, wiped his brow as if it perspired. "We must wait for Donaldson. We can't do anything without him."

"Well, I suppose he missed the train. He will come down to-morrow. Yes, I suppose we must wait for him, but

I thought we might as well have our plans ready."

"Yes, yes, of course." Crump's gray face looked relieved. "We won't talk about signing yet." Then he added: "There is no legal obstacle to our lawful partition. There is no policyholder. The last was Colyate."

Somehow the name struck me like a hammer. Colyate! Before an unknown horror I recoiled.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE ISSUE OF MAY 20TH.



THE GENIUS OF ARTHUR LEWIS

ARTHUR LEWIS is one of the best actors in this country. Like many other artists, he has always had an absolutely appalling contempt for money. Consequently, there have been times when he was "broke." He had approached this condition of financial depression when in the summer of 1907 the Frohman offices in London engaged him to create the part of *Vivash* in "The Hypocrites," by Henry Arthur Jones.

When the time came for the actor to sail from London to New York, he did not have money enough to buy his ticket. He applied to Mr. Frohman's London office for an advance of one hundred dollars on his salary—and got it. That night he spent it all on a celebration of his departure. Awakening the next morning, he found himself broke again.

This occasioned a lot more of tall thinking. He finally sat down and wrote to Henry Arthur Jones, the author of the play, asking him to advance him a hundred dollars. To this Jones replied that he never made loans to actors in his plays, and suggested that Lewis apply to the Frohman offices for the advance money.

Whereupon the actor wrote the author as follows:

MY DEAR MR. JONES: Under no circumstances would I ever apply to a manager for advance salary. Consequently, although it grieves me greatly, I find that I must renounce the pleasure of creating the rôle of *Vivash* in your wonderful play.

This worked like a charm. Jones sent the one hundred dollars, Lewis sailed, the play made a great hit in New York, and the greatest hit of all was the performance of Lewis as *Vivash*.

The morning after the initial performance, Lewis again got an advance on his salary from the Frohman offices. He sent fifty dollars to Jones, thanking him for the loan, and saying that he soon would send the other fifty. By this time all this frenzied finance had worked Lewis into a state verging on insanity. He was relieved when he received the following note from Jones:

MY DEAR ARTHUR LEWIS: I hereby acknowledge the receipt of your remittance. Pray do not bother about the remaining fifty, but buy something with it for yourself as a token of my gratitude to you for your performance as *Vivash*.

That afternoon Lewis, dignified and solemn, went out and bought himself a handsome traveling bag, on the bottom of which he ordered a gold plate to be placed, with the following inscription:

To Arthur Lewis from his grateful and admiring friend, Henry Arthur Jones.

Brown's Beat

By Hugh S. Fullerton

Author of "Mike Cupid and the Green-Eyed Monster," "The M. D. Marathon," Etc.

There are few story-dramas in which the shirt-sleeved copy reader of a newspaper office plays a prominent part. Fullerton drags him into the limelight in this comedy-drama, though William Tyler Brown, junior, intellectual giant, is the star

REPORTERS always are depicted in stories, novels, and on the stage as the keenest witted, most alert, analytical, deductive-minded, and breezy-mannered members of the species. No man is a hero to his valet, and if a copy reader isn't valet to the reporter, what is he? I'd like to see one newspaper printed if the copy reader hadn't shaved and shined and dressed up the untidy reporters' stuff.

This press agenting of reporters makes me tired. They look down upon copy readers, and use them only to blame for their own blunders, and no short-story writer ever made a copy reader his hero. Fine sort of a hero a copy reader would make, shirt-sleeved, without collar, smoking a pipe, and with his face all screwed up, trying to make out what some hero reporter meant by a sentence that hasn't either a subject or a predicate. This praise of reporters makes me sick. If it weren't for the copy readers——

Now there was Brown, for instance; there was an intellectual giant for you! I guess you don't remember William Tyler Brown, junior—and don't forget the junior. If he hadn't been junior, he'd be hopping counters at eight per instead of being vice president of a bank and privileged to say: "Ah, yes. I was a newspaper man once myself." You'll notice part of my hair is a lot grayer than the rest? Well, the grayest part stands for Brown. He was the son of the Seventh National Bank

and a diamond dog collar. The old man wanted Brown to have some journalistic experience to broaden him, he said. He was narrow enough to walk three abreast on a tight wire, and he had fallen for some of this stuff about the romance of a reporter's life. His father brought him down to the old *Times* office and fixed it with the publisher, who had some one introduce him to his managing editor, who sent for Billy Phillips. Billy says the publisher said: "Ah, Mr. Brown, this is one of the hands. He'll take care of your boy." Billy snorted when he got a glimpse of Brown, junior. Luckily Brown kept his hat on, so Billy didn't see the peak to his head or he'd have resigned. But Brown was wished onto him, and all there was to do was to make the best of it.

I've been against about all the known species of near-human beings who think they can write for newspapers, but Brown was a new type. He wrote everything about everything, nothing under a column. He was the best reporter, in his way, I ever witnessed. He never missed a detail of any story unless it amounted to something. He had taken lessons on the typewriter, used the touch system, and could rattle out words faster than I could guess what he meant by them. Phillips used to spend an hour a day thinking up something for Brown to do that was utterly useless and that he didn't want. If he sent Brown to report any real news, all a copy reader had to do was to

throw away all he had written and write a dozen lines of the essential facts he had left out.

Phillips couldn't very well fire him, since the publisher had put him to work, but Phillips was a diplomat as well as a city editor.

I quit the *Times* to take a job with the Press Association, handling the city news and sending it out to all the papers in town. About a week after I took the new job who should drive up in a big touring car but Brown! He always came to work in a touring car, but sent it home, probably thinking it would take the romance out of the reporter's life. I ought to have quit the job right there as soon as Brown arrived, but I needed the money. Phillips had told Brown delicately that the *Times* was not the best place for him to learn journalism; its scope was too narrow for a man of his caliber, and that what Brown ought to do was to get a position with the Press Association, where the work would be more diversified, more exciting, giving him greater opportunities to see the romantic side of the life. He even had volunteered to help Brown secure that desirable position. He hated to lose him off his own staff, but he knew his father wanted Brown to have all the advantages possible. Then he had conned Taylor, of the Press Association, to give Brown a job. It was neat work on Phillips' part, but pretty tough on me, as I had quit the *Times* chiefly to get away from Brown.

Taylor discovered the joke Phillips had played on him in one day, but instead of firing Brown, as he should have done, he hung to him, hoping to get a chance for revenge on Phillips. He got it all right, but not the way he expected. Brown hadn't sense enough to do any real harm, but he exhausted Taylor's ingenuity in thinking up assignments that would take him as far from the office as possible. He certainly gave Brown plenty of opportunities to get into romantic adventures, for he sent him as far as he could every day, hoping he would get lost. But he didn't. He always showed up, grin-

ning like a half-wit, and entirely unsuspecting, and wrote a two-column story without a line of news in it. He usually wrote steadily for two hours, turned in a twenty-page story about nothing, and said good night. You couldn't help liking him; he was so innocent and guileless. He never even suspected what Taylor was doing.

He was getting ten dollars a week, and he gave it to Jimmy, the office boy, for bringing up his cigarettes while he was writing. I could see that Brown was beginning to get on Taylor's nerves, and one night, along in midsummer, he and I went out to get a drink, and he told me, with a sigh of relief, that he had a scheme that would rid us of Brown for a month and put him where he couldn't do much harm.

He had assigned Brown to report the Lake View camp meeting as long as it lasted. Also he had ordered Brown to be at the camp grounds not later than ten in the morning, and to remain there until the services closed at night. As the services closed about ten o'clock, and the last train to town left about ten-twenty-five, he thought Brown was disposed of. Taylor had kept his face straight while he informed Brown that it was very important work and that he was being honored by such a mission of trust. No reporter, he assured Brown, ever before had been sent to report the camp meeting for an entire month, which was truth.

Lake View is thirty miles out, and the camp grounds are two miles from the railroad station. We calculated hopefully that Brown would miss the last train about one night in three anyhow and give us some surcease. But he didn't. The first night he came in breathless ten minutes before midnight, explaining he had to run all the way from the station, as he couldn't find a taxi. Almost everything was cleaned up for the night, and we were waiting for the late police reports. Brown wrote steadily until one o'clock, and turned in what looked like the manuscript of *Britannica*, bidding us a pleasant good night. Taylor glanced at it, swore a bit, and tossed it to me.

It was a wonderful report, commencing:

Camp-meeting services at the Lake View camp grounds commenced promptly at nine-thirty yesterday morning with prayer by the Reverend Doctor T. T. Blair, of the Second Church of Des Moines. This was followed by singing Hymn 138, "There Is a Fountain," omitting the second and fifth stanzas, the congregation standing. The Reverend Mr. Henry P. Jacobson, of Elmira, New York, delivered the morning sermon, speaking as follows . . .

There were three hundred and fifty words of what Mr. Jacobson said and so on, all day, until ten-five p. m., when, in a note, Brown explained that he was compelled to run to catch the train, and did not learn the title of the final hymn or the name of the minister who pronounced the benediction.

I groaned through all of it, excepting when I was swearing, then threw it all away and wrote two hundred words about the camp-meeting opening to send out to the papers.

The next night Brown arrived at nine minutes before midnight, having run from the station, and he wrote until one minute before one, when he handed in a complete account of the doings of the day. As soon as he got out of the office, Taylor threw the stuff to me, and I let out a roar against wading through it, and told him to read it himself. He swore for five or six pages, and then an idea struck him, and he commenced to grin.

He called an office boy, and told him to make copies of it and sent out twenty-five pages, two or three at a time, to every city editor in town. You should have heard the kicks. Every city editor in the city called up to inquire what idiot was sending out that kind of stuff at that hour in the morning. Taylor and I laughed until the tears rolled down our cheeks when Phillips called up, madder than a wet hen, and Taylor informed him that he merely wanted to show him what nice work his old reporter, Brown, was doing.

The next night in came Brown again, eleven minutes before midnight and out of breath, and wrote five thousand

words, beginning with the morning prayer and ending with the long-meter doxology and the benediction at ten-five. He seemed to expect to be praised because he had timed himself so as to see what preacher was pronouncing the benediction before he started for the train. We sent it all out to all the city editors, after shooting out a bulletin announcing that an extra was coming, and we got another howl from them.

It went on for two weeks; every night the same way. We started to set our watches by the time Brown reached the office. The city editors raved, but Taylor kept duplicating Brown's entire story and sending it out to them. When the city editors kicked, Taylor told them he was trying to convert a few unregenerate editors and copy readers. As soon as Brown finished his story Taylor would thank him very seriously, order the boy to duplicate it, and send it out. That relieved me of the trouble of wading all the way through it to see if anything worth printing really had happened, and threw the job onto the city editors, so I didn't mind.

Taylor was a kind-hearted man, and that led to trouble. I always claimed he was too kind-hearted to be a really good editor. One day he was feeling particularly kindly and so at peace with the world that he felt compassion even for Brown. He called Brown to his desk when he finished writing about the camp meeting, and talked to him as if he had human intelligence.

"My boy," he said, "you are doing fine work and very faithful reporting. Your work is quite remarkable in its way, but it seems to me it might be improved. You see, the papers haven't enough space for your kind of reporting. Being unable to use it all, they cannot use any of it without ruining the entire context. Let us try to write what the papers can print, and therefore want. They do not care for the interesting and instructive details because such things take place every day. What they really want is something unusual; something out of the ordinary. There must be some very interesting

things happening up there at the camp grounds that would help make your reports less prosy; less of the routine. Do you understand? Now to-morrow you look around up there and see if you cannot see something out of the ordinary to write about, something interesting. Get something that will make readers sit up and take notice. Do you see?"

"Yes, sir," said Brown, grinning semi-intelligently. "Yes, sir, I see."

I was interested in seeing what the result would be. Brown caught the last train the next night, and reached the office at eleven-forty-seven-fifty-two, beating his previous record by eleven seconds. He leaped to his typewriter and commenced to hammer out his story at extra speed. An hour and two minutes later he turned the story over to Taylor, said good night, and departed. I was busy with something until I heard Taylor groan and then swear. I looked up. Taylor was sitting at his desk with a hopeless air, and he threw me the story without a word. It started:

Camp-meeting exercises at the Lake View camp grounds commenced promptly at nine-thirty o'clock yesterday morning, with prayer by the Reverend K. T. Turner, of the Ninth Church of Kansas City. This was followed by the singing of Hymn 132. "Simply to the Cross I Cling," omitting the fifth stanza. The morning talk was by the Reverend Doctor Norman S. Kitterly, of Buffalo, New York, who spoke as follows

And there were nine hundred words after the "as follows."

"Well?" I asked Taylor.

"Have it duplicated and send it out," he replied wearily and as if discouraged. So I did.

It was just forty minutes later that the telephones commenced to sound like the Swiss bell ringers rehearsing. Taylor was answering three at once, while I tried to listen to two—both of whom or which were swearing. Phillips, of the *Times*; Godfrey, of the *Post*; Lewis, of the *News*; Higginson, of the *Dispatch*, and Wiley, of the *Mail*, were all on the phones at once, yelling their heads off and demanding that we give

them the names in that Lake View drowning at once.

Taylor looked at me, and I looked at Taylor. He swallowed hard four or five times, and said: "Brown." Then he swore frightfully even for him, and we dived together to find the copy of Brown's story of the camp meeting. We skimmed through it. Down in the last paragraph we found what we were looking for. It said:

Considerable excitement was caused during the day by the overturning of a canoe containing three young people—two girls and a young man, all prominent members of the camping party. All were drowned.

There wasn't time to swear just then. We were too busy. One reporter was rushed away in a taxi to bring Brown in dead or alive, preferably alive until we extracted the names from him. Then we jumped for the long-distance telephones. All the wires to Lake View were busy. Every newspaper in town was using every means possible to get men to the scene and to learn the details of the tragedy before the city editions went to press. When the city editors could not find anything else to do to hurry the work along they got on the wire and told us what they thought of us.

It was twenty minutes after two when the reporter who had been sent out to capture Brown rushed him into the office. He was grinning with idiotic self-satisfaction, but evidently a little bewildered by the rush we made upon him. Taylor hadn't time to stop and murder him, although he looked as if he wanted to do it.

"Who were those three people drowned at Lake View?" he demanded rapidly. "Give me the names."

"Why, Mr. Taylor," said Brown, still grinning, "there wasn't any one drowned."

"No one drowned? No one drowned!" Taylor repeated, staring at Brown with his mouth dropping open. "Why, you said——"

"I know, Mr. Taylor," said Brown half accusingly. "But, you know, you told me to put something in my story to make people sit up and take notice."

The Knowledge of Two

By G. B. Lancaster

Author of "As a Man Soweth," Etc.

"Work is man's only legitimate joy." It is Sothern of the Royal Northwest Mounted who gives expression to the aphorism. He has to change his opinion on a long trail when he comes face to face with certain stark facts that shake him out of his bleak, direct treadmill. For the first time in his life he is lost—in the subtle mazes of a rare woman's soul.

ON the rare occasions when Sothern was hounded into society he disappointed expectations badly. Being brown as a new cent, and with the gait of a man who habitually has half a universe to move in, he certainly attracted interest; but he was shy of the limp gained in a brush with a breed whom he had tried to arrest on the Mackenzie, and his eyes, used to thousand-mile horizons, looked blindish and pained in rooms. Moreover, he had no small talk, although he could—and, when forced into conversation did—tell you the exact mileage between Fort Macpherson and Sans Sault Rapids, the exact position on the scheduled map of each of those little red flags which indicate the barracks of the Northwest Police, the exact points whereby a mongrel with a streak of coyote, a streak of wolf, and a drop of Mackenzie hound may better a full-blooded husky as a sled dog—and a great deal more which was so scrupulously exact that the women fled from it. Then Sothern would thank the Lord, and go away to the stars and the wind and his pipe, these being his only real companions.

In Sothern's mental treadmill as he had developed it there was no place for women except as the lever which moves other men to all the primal passions and penalties. His was the bleak stand-

point which divides human nature into sheep or goats and then spends its days in faithfully corralling the goats. Therefore, Sothern, R. N. W. M. P., clear-headed and competent policeman though he was, reached the age of thirty-five in stark ignorance of that which a certain brown-eyed girl had been made bitterly free of long since.

The brown-eyed girl was Laurie Colerne. Nearly two decades back she had saved her candy and cookies for Sothern coming home from school, and he in return had punched the boys who pulled her hair and had bullied and neglected her himself after the manner of the young male animal the world over. Later, when the wild blood waked in the boy, so that he was sick for the sight of the deep-water ice and for the smell of the wind that blows out of desert places, her young arms and the ropes of her yellow hair, now wound cunningly about her tall head, could not hold him. He went away, and forgot her in a night. He had never claimed from her anything but patience, and she claimed from him nothing at all. But gossips nodded together when Sothern never came back, although it was full six years before Laurie consented to marry Geoff Dearsley, and they did more than nod when, twenty months after, word came East that Dearsley was wanted for the mur-

der of his clerk. It fell to Sothern, then at Regina, to follow Dearsley's trail, and among the tabulated records of the man's career he came on the name of Laurie Colerne, and was sorry for just so long as it took him to light his pipe and spread out the papers before him.

Then he forgot her again, and he slept that night with the thunder of great rivers through his dreams, and smelled the blue smoke of the camp fires and saw horizons run, shivering with golden heat, sheer over the rim of the world. And in the morning he shook the staleness and the white dust of Regina from his shoulders and went out to his work as a lover goes to a maid. For Sothern knew indubitably that work is man's only legitimate joy.

Six months later caught him among the blue tangle of rivers and lakes that sprawl over the trackless Barrens from the Great Slave Lake to the shores of the Hudson Bay, and that Dearsley was about ten days ahead of him, tracking out to the summer hunting grounds with a bunch of Yellow Knife Indians and their squaws, Sothern knew as positively as deduction by means of gray fire ash and displaced stones and the litter which always accompanied man's movements could tell him. Through the wastes that melted in haze to the sky spring glowed in the hot arms of summer. Geese and duck clanged over in long wedges, driving north to their breeding grounds. Insects drummed in the patches of willow; duck paired and splashed the blossoming reeds; the thin Indian trails knew the velvet pad of small feet and the burrowing of home-making snouts. All the creatures of the wild were about nature's business; all earth pulsed with life and with new life to be. And through the thick of it paddled and tramped the man, with heartbeats level and no shadow of dream in his eyes.

Daily he smoked his pipes to the tall, empty skies and splashed in river or lake with the waveys and frightened mallard and slept as the dead sleep while the stars wheeled over and the night wind blew dark on his face. Daily

the sensitiveness of the hunting animal quickened in his blood, but when he came over the portage into Artillery Lake through the violet haze of an evening, and saw a tepee stand like a brown bean stook by the shore, no instinct warned him as he cached his load and went down to it, loosing the heavy revolver at his belt.

The tepee was closed, and Sothern slashed the tie with his knife. Then he stepped in quickly, knowing himself a moment's target against the low red sun. It was dark and evil smelling, and he swore as he snatched up a handful of the deerskins piled in the center and slung them aside. Then he swore again, and stared with dropped jaw on the woman who lay below with a bandage about her white forehead and daffodil-yellow hair.

"What in the name of——" he said, and went on his knee and thrust his hand in through the black squaw dress to the cold flesh and feeble heartbeats. "What——" And then the brown eyes unclosed, fastening an instant on Sothern's face, sharp cut as a bronze in the fading light.

"Why, Jim, dear—you're back," she said, and again sense left her. Sothern lifted her roughly. He was of those who leave their first name behind with their boyhood, and he had not heard it in years until Laurie Dearsley brought full recognition to him with it now.

"For the land's sake!" he said, and shook her. "Laurie! Laurie! Where's Dearsley?"

But he could not reach the borderland where she lay. Not although he beat and chafed her cold limbs, and forced brandy down her throat and bore her out that the cool wind from the spruce wood might blow on her. Their friendship was gone too far into the past to move him now. She was Dearsley's possession, Dearsley's clew; as such he valued and worked over her until faint color and warmth came back to her, and impatience in himself broke the curb. Before night had smudged the last opal lights into velvet black he searched the beach and the little

hills that peered through the sliding mists and the calm glass of the lake, where swam the chrome and purple of sky. These gave no sign, and then he went to the tepee. Here five minutes' methodical investigation proved that Dearsley had left no one particle of evidence whereby his wife could be identified. Name corners were gone from handkerchiefs and clothing; a pocket Testament had the front page torn out; a silver-backed, monogrammed brush was ruthlessly defaced. Sothern sat back on his heels and considered.

When he stooped over the woman again the thin lines of his face were a little cruel, and in the eyes, which usually told nothing, light gleamed. Men who knew him would have known that Sothern had been making deductions as usual and that he was ill-pleased. Without doubt, Dearsley, warned by that infallible Indian telegraphy which flickers over all the Northwest, had found himself hard pressed, and had left his wife, with or without her consent, as a check on the policeman. Either he believed her dying, and had flung her to the other man's mercy, or else he had trusted her to deflect Sothern's aim. Sothern would have flogged Dearsley raw if he had caught him at this moment. Instead, he lit a fire and fed Dearsley's wife, and with the first faint struggling of her back to life his words battered her:

"Laurie, where's Dearsley—Geoff Dearsley? Your husband, you know. Where is he?"

"Geoff?" The name stung her into sudden fire. "Ah, don't let him come! Don't let him come, Jim. I'll die if he comes."

"Lie down!" Sothern caught her impatiently. "You don't want to make yourself worse. What's the matter? Did he do *this* to you?"

She shuddered down against him, locking her arms over her head as though to ward off a blow. Incoherent pleading and sobs broke from her. The man watched with narrowing eyes. Then he stooped suddenly, gripping her wrists.

"Laurie, listen to me. He's va-moosed and left you—Dearsley has. Where's he gone? Did he go with the Yellow Knives?"

"Go? He comes—and he comes, I tell you. He was here just now. He says I'm his wife. *His* wife! Jim—how long are you going to make me bear this? How long?"

Sothern reached a foot and kicked the fire into flame. He thrust chin and shoulders forward, staring at her with that close, impersonal scrutiny which his work had taught him. Color born of the firelight drew deep beauty to her dark, heavy-lidded eyes and her curved, warm mouth and the delicate contour of chin and brow that rose from the white-stemmed throat. But it was the position of the wound on the temple, the intense stare of the eyes only, which interested the man.

"Steady! He's not here now. Did he tell you I was coming? Did he tell you to wait for me?"

"What? He's crazy, you know. They all say it. But you'll speak to him, Jim?"

"What do you want me to say?"

"Say! What does a man say when his wife is insulted by another man? You ought to know, I imagine. Say that I've never loved any one but you since I wore my hair braided and pinned up with ribbons. Say that—whom God has joined—Geoff Dearsley's lies—cannot put asunder. Jim—it's all sliding away."

The piteous voice stopped. At his feet she lay still, and for a space Sothern stood still as she. Calloused as he was to nearly every form of madness and tragedy that tortured human nature can bear, her words did not move him. But his position did.

"What the devil shall I do with her if she keeps this up?" he said. "What the devil shall I *do*? Wonder if the brain—"

He fetched the little case of instruments which he always carried, bared the wound, and cut away the clotted yellow hair. Very gently and skillfully he worked, with never a quiver of the strong fingers or the strong mouth.

Then he got his arms round her and took her back to the tepee. She was heavy, with her long, rounded limbs and her white, soft curves and the full masses of her yellow hair. Even in her slim budding time she had promised a Junolike womanhood, Sothern remembered. The rotten upper garment she wore ripped loose as he laid her down. He wrapped it over the fair shoulder hastily, and went out again.

In the brooding hush the flick of a fish in the lake brought a sudden tremor to his pulses. The little hills and the stretched spaces beyond were remote, formless; the mist moved in filmy strands as though unseen fingers wove a spell of silence—an age-old silence, mysteriously wise, builded of unnumbered, speechless centuries. It seemed to suck the sudden flame of consciousness from his blood, just as it had sucked heat and fire from those gray sticks on the beach. Then he lifted his shoulders with a grunt of acceptance, and went to the portaging of his packs over the trail.

All night he worked through the mist and the blue-white of the moon, until the canoe lay nose to water, and the mast was stepped and the loads piled with a clear space amidships where a woman could sit. And when the saffron and pink of dawn struck him out at last from the universal gray he hesitated but a moment before he looped back the tepee flap and went in, meeting her wide eyes as he came. She was sitting among the skins, with her long, slim hands pressed to the bandage, and she was talking to one who was not there.

"You need not ask it again." There are some things a woman keeps to herself in spite of—hell. If I'd married you when I loved him, I would deserve all you call me. But I never was your wife. Only Jim's." She leaned suddenly forward, with hands out. "Jim!" she said.

The curve of arms and deep bosom and pillared throat shone on the dark like ivory. They were as grave and potent a caress as her slow voice. Sothern frowned, and went over to

her. His sole interest at this moment was to get her into a fit state to go on. His business was with Dearsley, and she was no more than the glove flung down in challenge. Sweat had streaked the dark hair on his tired forehead, and his limp was more perceptible. But that dogged persistence which is man's most terrible weapon was strong in him. Not anything she had or was could sidetrack him for a moment now.

"Jim——" She drew him down, with her soft cheek to his. "I should know it was you if I'd been dead for years. It's life again—this. And I—I've been sick. I can't remember—dear, that scarlet out there. It's the sun?"

"Yes."

"And that corner of blue is the lake? And that's a lark singing above the little brown hill. And—you are *you*. Now I know that—all that was—unclean and that frightened me has—gone away. And—you are *you*."

Her voice broke on a sigh of purest joy. Her breath was warm on Sothern's neck, and the crisp tendrils of her hair tickled his ear. He turned his head, looking at her with those eyes which had pierced secrets time and again. She was not the girl of the elder days, for that girl had never offered one whisper of love. She was not like the women who had fringed his life along the trails. They had offered too many, and with a coarseness which had offended him. Men knew that there was a something curiously virgin about Sothern. His work was his wife, and he understood it. He had never understood women.

"Jim!" She clung closer. "You know, dear. How could I have married him—loving you? It's better for a girl to die than do that. Isn't it?"

"Yes. Maybe. Laurie, can you ——"

"Better to die." Some passion in her voice stirred him at last. "To marry one—loving another. There is no greater hell. Perhaps a man can't understand?"

"No." He kept his eyes on her. "No, maybe he can't."

"Some girls do it. They're afraid

—when people talk. But I—every fiber—every nerve of me—violated by the thought. Jim! Tell me I couldn't! You *know*!"

"Yes. No. Good Lord! How should I know? Lie down again, Laurie."

"A man never quite understands—immolation. You were so long away, and you never wrote. I read everything about you in the 'Police Blue Books.' They were dreadful—and there was Geoff Dearsley all the time. And people said—Jim, you don't know what it's *like* when people say—things!"

The sun pushed over the world's rim, baring a thousand untrod miles to the searching light of day. Laurie lay full in the eye of it, and the man felt a sudden untoward impulse to shield her from it, from him, from herself.

"All right. Let that go. Come right along with me and get breakfast, Laurie."

"With you? Of course. You'll not let *him* come?"

"My hat! If he only would! No, not yet."

"And if he does—I'm safe with you?"

"Safe? I suppose so. Look here; you better lie right down again while I fetch your breakfast."

"Kiss me, then."

Her soft lips sought his, and her breath was milky sweet as a deer's. Sothern went out, stripped, and broke through that sheet of liquid light which was the lake with the swift onslaught of his body. And then the balance of his world swung level again, and he made a fire and cooked breakfast.

The sun was high, and all that was tremulous and uncertain swept from the world when Sothern fumbled again at the tepee flap. He lifted it, and she, standing tense as though the soul in her were tiptoe for flight, gave a crow of delight that rang in his ears long after, and came to him round the wall, guiding her dizzy steps with light finger tips against the rough skins. The man, watching her come, knew that all which was tremulous and uncertain had been

swept from her brain, too. She was sure of herself; sure of him; sure that the forgotten past had held what she had so agonizingly desired it to hold. Her arms were about him, and her heart beat against his.

"Take me out. It's a nightmare in here. Jim—*Jim*!"

She was trembling with the effort already. Sothern held her up, never moving his eyes from her.

"Dearsley?" he said, and she hid her face against him.

"That's the nightmare." Then she made confession brokenly, swinging from laughter to fear: "When I woke just now and saw my ring—Jim—I, oh, for an awful moment I was so sick, afraid. So afraid! I heard you coming, and I—Jim, I just couldn't *bear* it. If you'd waited one more moment, I know my heart would have stopped. It would."

"What were you afraid of?" But he knew that he knew.

"Geoff Dearsley." She whispered it half guiltily. "Don't be angry. I'd have killed myself before—you know that I would."

"Laurie, wait a moment!" He forced her face up to meet his. "Why should you be so—so frightened of Dearsley?"

"Because"—her brown eyes met his, clear and calm—"because I have never loved any one but you, Jim, and he wanted to marry me."

"Supposing he had? Women do that kind of thing. There's something damnably half civilized about them all."

"If he had, I would have prayed that I might die before I ever saw you again." There was a timbre in her voice now which made him wince. Then she laughed faintly, freeing herself. "It's so funny—my head, you know. Jim, I hardly feel as if we were married. I've forgotten so much. It's as if we—we were boy and girl at home, you know—and I was sitting on the porch and you whistled over the thorn hedge."

Beneath the dust of hard years those old days moved like dead bones in the valley of Sothern's memory. He stood a moment with his intent gaze on her,

calculating, considering. Then, with a shrug, he turned on his heel.

"Well, suppose you come right along and have breakfast," he said only. But to himself he added: "She's got to come with me—and right now, too. And, from what I remember of her, she won't if I tell her the truth. She'd drown herself, or run clean out into the horizon or—she's got to *come*, anyway." Then, turning the damper in the ash a little later, he said slowly: "Suggestion, of course. Dearsley knocked her out with that clip on the head, and she saw me first when she woke up. And—what's she going to think when she sees Dearsley?"

The claim of the trail fell upon the two from that hour forward. For Sothern the paddle work or the track line, thigh deep in swirling water, until even his tough muscles gave out and he lay, dumb and sweating, like a brown chip tossed up by the foam. For her the tiller or the bottom of the canoe, with lips pressed close to hold back her moans from the man, and her patient eyes gone blind with the torment of pain. For them both the portages where the black flies clung, drunken with blood, and close as a garment, and the ridges of the rocks cut the feet and the broken distance went out in a resting mist. It was no place for a woman while the sun was at its fiercest, and if she wondered what thoughtless cruelty had brought her there she never asked. After the first days she asked nothing, she questioned nothing, gave nothing. And Sothern never saw. Within a week they had dropped back almost to that long-ago, loose-knotted friendship which his indifference had never let tighten into a bond. He tramped blind through her heart again, as he had done years before—as he tramped through the sunsets and sunrises and all that wordless beauty of fleef flower and sap-green leaf and grass. He trod her down as he trod out the fire ash on many a lonely camping place, or the crisscrossed animal spore on many a secret trail.

And, scrupulously careful in his deal-

ings with her, he never saw. Because he shouldered three-fourths of the physical labor he believed that he did his duty by her as a woman. Because he listened to her talk, and braced himself for her morning and evening kisses he believed that he gave at least as much as some men give their wives. Through that first day he had privately scheduled their future lives with painstaking exactness, and he put the stark facts before her over the next camp fire, not watching her as he spoke.

"Don't try to remember all you've forgotten. The future's a big enough risk for any of us to take. Get strong. Nothing else matters. And tell me if I work you too hard." And then, as he rose: "I've pitched your tepee in that clump of spruce. Call me if you want anything. Good night."

"Call you——"

He had met her startled eyes with a desperation beyond humor. "Certainly. My kit's in the canoe. Can't sleep under cover out here, you know."

"I—I'd forgotten." Then she leaned to him with grave lips. "Good night, Jim."

He submitted to the kiss as he submitted until the night came when she did not give it. And he never noticed the omission. The days were full of labor for him, and full of the heat of the chase and the throbbing belief that, by the data which he daily gathered, he was daily gaining. The nights were full of dreamless and moveless sleep. Now and again he chafed at the nameless, inevitable little intimacies which intruded even on this life which had swept the woman to the very rim of the eddy, and his ignorance never knew them for the veriest eggshells of intimacies, crushed by a look and blown away on the wind of a breath. But the woman knew.

She was not even a companion to him. He made the pace too hot for that, as the Barrens took the last leaf of a tree from them, giving instead trackless oceans of blowing grass and a stooping sky molten with heat. Strange scents and strange, potent odors of animals rose from the burrowed hills

and hung over the rivers. Senses quickened until they could smell a musk ox miles down wind or feel the far-off tread of a caribou herd as they lay of nights on the earth. For them mysterious sounds threaded the wash of some sleepless lake or the hollow roar of the wind. For them the endless spaces were filled like a bowl with translucent light, and the sapphire and orange dusks were streaked high with the black flight of birds. Together they went forward into greater solitude than ever Adam took Eve. But those great, brooding mysteries that throbbed in the loneliness and echoed out of the wastes lashed the woman's soul only into a flame of torment. Sothern, with eyes and thoughts earthward, nosed out his way, moved only by the knowledge that, through three forced marches by moonlight and one at dawn, he was surely gaining on Dearsley at last.

One night—Laurie had ceased to count them, although each hour was precious to Sothern—they lay by a nameless lake beyond Height of Land, and a caribou herd came down. Sothern heard their whispering hoofs in the seeding grass and the broad wash of water before the breast stroke, and he crept out with his rifle for fresh meat. Crouched among the boulders, he saw them sweep over the slopes against the stars in a far-flung, endless line, bickering and driving at each other with playful crash of horns, wading deep in the shallows to drink, while petulant does stamped on slender feet and the procession of bulls shouldered forward, black against the light-edged ripples that broke around them. At Sothern's side a pebble rolled down, and a hand touched his.

"Jim—it's like a sea rolling over half the world. Where are they going?"

"To the North. The does will stay. They'll come back late in the fall with their young."

"Oh!" Her breath fluttered a moment. "And—the others?"

"Lord knows! They'll be off to their stamping grounds somewhere."

Silence again. The man was approving the ripple of those strong mus-

cles in the bluish light, and that the woman beside him was strung up to breaking point he never guessed—until that long-borne tension suddenly snapped.

"Jim—what have I done? What have I done? You must tell me, for I cannot bear it any more."

"Done?" Sothern raised himself on his palm and looked sharply round. "*Done!*"

"Why are you punishing me? What did I do in that time I can't remember that you—find so impossible to forgive?"

Her voice was low, and her kneeling outline motionless. But the very warp and woof of passion seemed woven round her with the words. Across the lake a bull belled strongly, and Sothern sat up with a jerk.

"What? Don't understand. What the nation are you talking about?"

"I've tried to bear it without asking. I know—you always hated—words. But I can't. What have I done to lose —" The tense voice broke. "A dog would be more to you than I am. What have I done that you should put me out of your life?"

His mind fled in alarm over the last days and back again. "I haven't been a brute to you, have I? Not worked you too hard or anything? I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, yes, you do, Jim." She came to her feet wearily, and leaned against the rock with hanging hands. "This isn't marriage. No two strangers were ever farther apart than we are. This isn't marriage; it's—purgatory."

Sothern got up and faced her. His faded shirt looked strangely white against the copper-brown face and throat. For a wild moment laughter shook him, and he meditated a blurring out of the truth. Then she spoke again:

"I've been trying to piece it out. It's something I did—some sin, isn't it? And you brought me up here—to hide me. I hurt my head and forgot. But you can't forget. I have—disgraced you, perhaps."

"For the Lord's sake! Are you crazy? Laurie——"

"Not crazy. No. I don't think you'd have brought me here if you'd loved me. But you loved me once or you wouldn't have come back and married me. You must have done that, though I can't remember. I remember nothing between the old days when we were together and now. All the rest is that black sickness when I thought that Geoff Dearsley—— But *you* must remember." She came near, and her words were searing flames. "You know what the love of a man and a woman means. What marriage means. What all those wonderful days that I can—— can only guess at must have meant to you and me. *You* know."

On the rock lay Sothern's rifle. His hand groped and closed over it as though it would give back that which was breaking down round him. He did not know, and only dimly was he now conceiving what such ignorance meant—what the crass idiocy of his belief that he could counterfeit life to the woman who had lived, it was going to mean.

"We must have loved once," she said again, like one who beats a cage. "Sometimes, it seems, I can remember *how* we must have loved—you and I. Or is it dreams? You don't love me now. There is not one spark of love for me in all your body. I couldn't be your wife and not know that. I couldn't love you as I still do and not know it."

"I——" Sothern's breath died in his throat. He had not even that reverent love which some men feel for all womankind. In interest she had never compared with her husband—the man he hunted, the legitimate prey of his work, the fool who had left the woman as a drag on the hunter and whose guard Sothern was triumphantly overreaching by the utmost extent of his powers and hers. Only that morning his exact and absorbing deductions had asserted that, although Indians had split off to the east and west, Dearsley followed the water still, no more than two long days ahead.

He stared, dumb, seeing with the eyes

of a man used to night work, more than the tall and supple outline of her body. He could see the shine of the great plait of yellow hair that fell over her shoulder, the curve of the cheek like a peach bloomed by the sun, the dark-lashed dark eyes with that soft, watching look which something now knew for appeal, the ripe, gracious, innocent womanhood of her as he had seen it this month past, not knowing that he saw. Now he knew—and knew that she was no more the girl Laurie of old than he was the blind and unthinking boy. He knew, and was dumbed by the knowledge. And she, feeling his silence as the rock against which she was beating her soul to death, cast the remnants of her reserve down before him.

"Perhaps you cannot understand—how you have shamed me. Here, where we can't get away from each other—every day, every hour I have to depend on your strength and your knowledge. I'd have to die—without you. And you have shown me how utterly I—I mean nothing to you. You will take nothing from me. I know, long ago, you were like that. But now—I am your wife. *That* is the bond you are trying to break. You always used to think—you could break *or* throw away—anything you didn't want. But this isn't easily broken, Jim."

Each word was born on a separate breath of pain. Sothern was growing conscious that he had done her a greater wrong than he could yet conceive; that, under cover of the, to her, eternally sacred marriage tie, he was letting her tear open the very quick of her soul to him. And, out of all those myriad strange isolations and dualities of body and soul whereby God has ordained that humanity shall live, he knew that he was the last man who should hear it.

The passage of that great stream of life down the slopes and across the lake, the whimpering of the does, and the low, imperious thunder of the bulls struck electricity into the air for him as it had done long since for her. He was shaken out of his bleak, direct

treadmill, but further knowledge was no more than a blur. She stepped back with a long breath.

"It might have been better if I hadn't said—anything. You're honest, Jim, anyway. You never pretended. That's why I know you must have cared. That's why I'm ashamed that I couldn't—couldn't keep your love. My love for you is something I can't escape so easily. I've tried. When I first began to guess how it was with you I tried. But it's no use. I can't stop my heart jumping when I hear you call. I can't stop my very blood—answering. There's no shame in that. I couldn't give less when I married you. But I am shamed that I couldn't keep your love."

To tell her that she had never had that love was the only possible counter, and no man on earth could have given it. Sothorn knew that much as he stood and sweated. Beyond that he had no ideas at all. She turned from him slowly.

"Thank you for listening—and for not pretending. I suppose it doesn't matter how it came about. Perhaps you didn't know until—there was only me. I thought I wanted to know. Now—it doesn't matter. It's hard for you, too."

"This is absurd." He found his voice at last. "There's nothing wrong. I——"

"You have only ceased to love me," she said quietly, and left him.

When they met again it was she who made the situation possible, for Sothorn had as yet no foothold. She had stung him into full realization of her at last, roused him to a startled and unsuspected knowledge of himself. But he would not probe in a day or a week the meaning of this dislocation of all his values. He would not probe in a year the rare and subtle mazes of a rare woman's sensitive soul. She had no reproaches for him. She did not serve him the less. But in an hour she had spun an intangible veil about her, none the less final because, despite herself, her cheeks still flew the flag of surrender at his coming.

They worked together still, compelled to it as ever were Adam and Eve. Their fingers touched while he spliced the cracked paddle she held for him; her breath was warm on him when she rubbed his sprained back the day he fell among the sharp rocks in the river; the very clothing he wore was patched from hers. When breathless days climaxed in mountains of green and indigo clouds, and the lakes were pools of blood sliced across by gray knives of rain, and the thunder made of empty earth and sky a terrible sounding-board for the voice of gods he shielded her shrinking body with his own and warmed her cold hands against his flesh. And when the fierce summer had burned quick to the chill of fall, and ice was brittle in the backwaters, and the little gray birds of the Barrens piped desolate through the gray silence, they carried their loads together over the portages and sat together over the camp-fire meal. And they talked as men and women must talk or go mad with the thoughts that pressed on them with iron fingers.

Naked earth and infinite sky, the resistless surge of the seasons, the tumultuous glory of sunset, the stealthy come and go of the northern lights through the pallor of night—all these things, familiars of years, were new and restless enemies to Sothorn now. That which had slept overlong was waking, and with a strength which he could not gauge. For there was not anything in that stark, duty-ridden mind of his to give him comparison. Gradually the keen desire to take Dearsley was changing into a dread. But the more he sought to plumb his desires the more they eluded. When they came on a half dozen canoes brimmed with Dog-leg Indians going out with furs to Fort Resolution, Sothorn was startled at his own terror of the question and answer which concerned Dearsley and told nothing. And he turned and watched the flash and dip of their paddles up the lake as though wondering if they maybe would chance on something which he had left behind on the trail.

There were Eskimos at the next camp, staring indifferently at the man, with his hairy, bare arms and his tattered clothes and his lean face, but crowding greedily for a sight of the woman's fair skin and yellow hair. Sothern felt a sudden fury shake him at that. But he did nothing, and within three days they came on Kinepeeto Eskimos fishing in whaleboats round Chesterfield Inlet, and looked at the colorless sea and knew that their solitude was ended.

With ringing feet, winter was hard behind them over the Barrens. The lakes they had known would be steel by now, and all the quick life gone. There was no way back for body or soul across that long trail taken together. Sothern knew it in the moment when he bribed two of the men to take them south to the barracks at Fullerton and learned in reward that Dearsley had gone down in the day before.

The sea was a livid threat, mountains high and crusted with ice. The wind blew on a streaming rain, and Sothern's palms were raw and his muscles a live ache as they fought south for two days and three nights with never an hour of sleep. Laurie slept under the skins, and at times she bailed the boat. And Sothern spoke to her roughly when he had to speak, because, so far as his tortured body would let him, his soul was enduring what hers had endured so long. When they carried her ashore at Fullerton she was unconscious with the cold, and Sothern grabbed the arm of a horrified young constable.

"Don't let her see or hear anything about Dearsley," he said.

Later, as they thawed him before the fire, they told him. Dearsley had come dead from the sea, and now lay under the snow.

"We'll dig a hole for him when the frost goes out of the earth in spring," said the sergeant. "Your lady is getting on fine—sitting up in the parlor, with a fire halfway up the chimney."

Sothern wore the sergeant's best uniform. It was much too short and too wide for him, but there was a some-

thing in his face and manner which kept laughter away. He looked up, speaking quietly.

"Could you get me a piece of paper and a pencil?" he asked. And then, writing slowly and with long pauses, he told Laurie that which it was necessary for her to know, and sent the note to her.

They left him alone after that, and he sat with arms crossed on the table and his head on them for three hours before her message came. At her door, he hesitated as he had once hesitated on entering the tepee. Then he drew his hand across his eyes and went in. The little room was in firelight only, and Laurie sat beyond the gleam of it, a misty shape in the pale silks of a kimono belonging to the young constable. Sothern stood within the door. He did not speak.

"There's a chair by the fire." She pointed. "Please sit down."

Sothern came forward slowly, standing by the mantelshelf.

"When you have clearly understood —"

"I understood at once." Her voice and manner curbed him. "It would have been very hard for you to do anything but what you did. Too hard, I suppose. You had to wait until it was possible for you to get away from me."

"For God's sake! Until you could get away from me, if you—want to."

"Until I could get away from you. Yes." Still her voice held him. "You do allow that I—even I might want to do that when I remembered all that I have said and done to a stranger."

"You need not speak to me like that, dear," he said.

"You are a stranger." She shielded her face with her hand. "I know nothing of all the years and the people and the thoughts which made you a man. I know nothing of the real motives which moved you to—this. Those years which I thought were yours—they were his. Those months on the Barrens, when I looked to you for everything—I was his. That night when I said—what even you might have

guessed to be sacred—to be told only to the one man—I was his.”

“I am the one man. I always was, really. And now I know it.”

“Do you?” Her laugh was bitter. “Well, of course, you have every right to know it. I told you clearly enough, didn’t I?”

Sothorn frowned. She was sweeter than he had felt her yet, in this flowing silk which made her so gracious and all womanly to look on. But the little head, where the thick hair was knotted and wound in shining coils, was stiffened with an agonized pride, and the dark eyes had no softness, no pleading. They burned. Knowing his want of skill in gesture and speech, he was very much afraid. Knowing his love, color and life went out of the world for the moment, and from some cold, clinging shadows he heard himself speak.

“That isn’t the way I learned. Tell me when you’re through with this nonsense, and I’ll make you understand. I want my wife——”

“I have been your wife.” Pain flashed out in her swiftly. “Was there ever an hour in all those days when we were not together? Was there ever a night that I didn’t creep out and watch you sleeping—and run away again if you moved, for I have some pride, although you may not think it? By every word and look and thought I have been your wife in every nerve of me. And you were a stranger who did not care, and you never told me.”

Sothorn walked through the room with head bent. He came back, staring, not at her, but at the fire.

“I’ve been a precious fool, I suppose. I don’t know anything about your sort of woman. At first I shielded myself from you. Afterward—I shielded you from myself. You never thought that I—I did it for—for any selfish or personal motives, did you?”

“No.” She stretched her hands to the fire, and he saw the plain ring glisten and remembered the man who lay stark under the snow. “No, I absolve you from blame. You behaved extremely well.”

“——I guess I wouldn’t behave so if it had to come again, if you will have it,” he said roughly.

The jar in his voice startled her. She turned, pressing her hands over her heart and staring with eyes like those of some trapped animal of the wilds.

“Since your letter came—through these hours—I have been remembering. Bit by bit I have remembered, and I know—oh, believe me, believe me, I thought I had killed my love for you before I married Geoff. I thought it. I never dreamed that to see you again would have meant—this.”

“D’you think I don’t know that?” Sothorn came near with glowing eyes. “You white flower of women, d’you think I don’t know that?”

“How should you know?” Her voice was piteous. “It is not likely that you—any man—could understand. All my heart and soul—all that was really *me*—I gave to that man of the Barrens. I gave it to you, Jim, unasked, unwanted, and you knew it. The best you could think of me through those months was pity and the worst.”

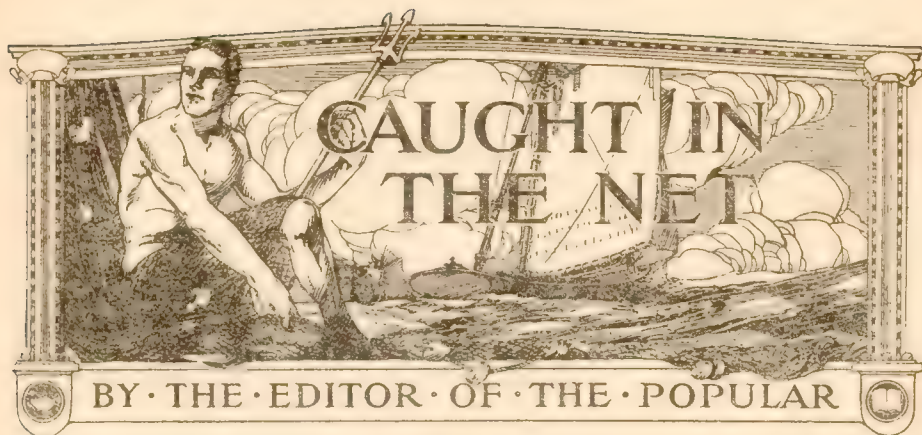
“There was no worst. You have a more beautiful soul than a man could imagine—until he saw it.”

“You have seen too much. I have no rags left to cover myself. I have violated the natural law. A man—it is his privilege to speak—to give. A woman—any woman worthy the name—she must withhold. She must keep some reserves. She must have her own inner fortress which even the man who loves her knows is sanctuary to her alone. I have none—none——”

Three times Sothorn tried to find words. Then he dropped on his knee and hid his face in her lap.

“You have. And I respect it so—I reverence it so—that I’d never try to enter it any other way but on my knees—Laurie—Laurie——”

And then suddenly she cried out with sobs like a tired and very lonely child, and he, feeling her tears on his neck, lifted himself and caught her in his arms.



PREPAREDNESS

THE battleship *Texas* was running ten knots an hour during target practice. One mile away, a target three feet square was being towed at five knots an hour in the opposite direction. The *Texas* fired three shots. Two were bull's-eyes and the third carried away the edge of the target.

It was rattling good news, and Americans who read it shook their heads in approval.

One of the gun crews at Fort H. G. Wright, Fisher's Island, guarding the northern entrance to Long Island Sound, sighted a target ten thousand yards out to sea. The target was a pyramid of white canvas with a twelve-foot edge—about ten feet high. A twelve-inch rifle was wheeled into position, and the shell struck the target—nearly six miles away. One—two—three—twelve targets were picked off, one after the other.

Great work! Our coast defense isn't so bad, after all. But how long did it take to develop the gunners?

Modern wars are artillery wars. It takes two years to make an efficient artilleryman. He doesn't sight the big gun like a rifle. The whole process is a matter of spherical trigonometry and analytical calculus. In getting the range for a shot, you have to figure on many influences that will change the course of the projectile—temperature of the air, velocity of the wind, gravity, curvature of the earth, barometric conditions, and a few others.

After these have been taken into consideration, they must be corrected. To quote from the drill regulations, here is the process of making corrections for atmosphere alone, without considering wind, tide, velocity, et cetera:

Adjust the ruler. Set a marker to the curve corresponding to the atmosphere reference number. Set a marker to the curve corresponding to the height of tide. Set a marker to the curve corresponding to the velocity assumed for the first trial shot. The wind component indicator having been set for the azimuth and the velocity of the wind and the azimuth of the target, note the range reference number and place a marker at the top of the wind curve having that number. As soon as the approximate range is given, set the ruler for the range and the index at the origin of the scale; slide the pointer opposite the atmosphere curve indicated by the marker, holding the bar in place with the left hand; slide the bar until the pointer is at the normal for atmosphere. This completes the correction for atmosphere.

Other corrections are equally difficult.

After reading this, it is easier to understand why our general staff laughs at the idea of a million men springing to arms overnight.

THE SUBMARINE

THE submarine is a diving torpedo boat that fires its torpedoes while submerged, operates on the surface by oil engine, and beneath it by electric power. The largest are of 1,200-ton displacement when submerged. Ours now building will displace 800 tons, with a length of 250 feet, and with a speed of 14 knots submerged and 19 on the surface. The largest carry eight torpedoes, with the maximum range of 10,000 yards, that travel at a speed of 35 knots under water, and when launched are regulated to travel between ten and fifteen feet below the surface. She rarely uses her torpedoes, however, beyond a 2,000-yard range, and usually operates at less than 500 yards. Tested at 150-foot submergence for structural strength, the submarine usually operates from 16 to 60 feet under water. At the minimum depth she has two feet of her 18-foot periscope clear for accurate aim and observation.

Above deck she carries two high-angle one-pounder antiaircraft guns, and 3-inch guns for attack or defense that fire a 14-pound shell. Her decks cannot stand the strain of a heavier gun, but before the war is ended we may see submarines armed with 5-inch guns.

In a duel on the surface with a merchantman of equal speed and a corresponding battery the merchantman has the advantage in a more steady gun platform and in less vulnerability to shell fire. The advantage possessed by the submarine is that of the smaller target, but it is a considerable one. Her shells may riddle the upper works of the merchantman without doing vital harm, but one well-directed shell, even from a one-pounder at close range, will end the submarine's career. But it must be a full hit, not a glancing one, and little of the submarine shows above water that can be hit. The merchantman carrying 4, 5, or 6-inch guns on reinforced decks can outrange a pursuing submarine and fire many shells before the submarine can close in to effective shell-fire distance.

WHITE RATS AS SALESMEN

LATE one afternoon the Middle West sales manager of a bank-supply house, with offices in St. Louis, heard the door open—the desks were all out in one open room, with no private offices and their accompanying suggestion of secrecy and underground plotting—and in walked a wire cage as large as an old-fashioned hard-coal stove.

The propulsion force proved to be a salesman who came into view after the cage stopped in the middle of the room. He asked and was granted permission to demonstrate what he termed "the world's greatest rat trap."

"Don't get alarmed now, ladies," he admonished the feminine element of the office force.

He brought in a large bucket with a perforated lid, walked over to the corner, and poured out a dozen trained white rats. These rats lined up, single file, walked over to the trap, on up an incline and inside, to show how the trap worked.

"The theory of the trap," explained the salesman, "is that the rat, smelling the cheese bait, goes around until he finds the entrance. He looks in and sees his reflection in a mirror, figures it's another rat, and, hence, safe, and enters."

It was the best practical demonstration the office manager had ever witnessed, and probably the first time live rats had been used to demonstrate a trap.

The rat-trap salesman admitted modestly that he led his company's sales force in volume of orders, and that he firmly believed it was due to the rats rather than himself.

"IT IS TO LAUGH!"

AN alliterative aphorism has long stuck in our mind to the effect that to get the most out of life one must love and laugh and learn. Earnestly have we pondered upon these three requisites, and have come to the conclusion that a person might eke out some sort of existence without the first and third, but without the second all would be lost. Perhaps that is the reason so much is paid for laughter. It is a truism that the people of the United States spend more money on being amused than for any other emotion. Our jesters with pen, pencil, tongue, and act are given rich reward. Even the lowest grade of humor is applauded and beloved by multitudes. Back of this taste and indulgence are sound instinct and health, for laughter is a physical and spiritual tonic, and as Bergson, the French philosopher, points out, it is the greatest corrective of manners.

Many of the foremost thinkers of the world laughed away the follies, shams, and abuses of their age. Laughter is effective as a scourge and a purge of society. Let us consider some of the supreme laughers of history. There is Democritus, whose philosophic attitude toward life was that everything should be laughed at, including himself. Then there is Aristophanes, laughing at the Greek sophists until their theories are confounded and their false intellectual influence ended. Another potent laughter was Lucian, of the second century, his mockery putting to confusion the sickly sentimentalists of his day. In the period of the Renaissance we note the great humanist, Erasmus, filling northern Europe with the sanity of his hearty laughter. Of the same era is the robust and licentious Rabelais, whose *rire immense* was directed at the monkish system, at the foolish educational curriculum, and at a thousand other malpractices and conventions. Monarch of ridicule, Cervantes appears, to deal the deathblow to the moribund and silly chivalry of his times. Then comes old Voltaire to flay medievalism with his acrid wit and prepare the way for the rise of democracy. Again, Swift's keen and merciless laughter makes the hypocrisy and cant of England wince. And to-day we have Bernard Shaw, who apparently follows the advice and example of ancient Democritus.

A friend of ours who made a study of the laughter of the world discovered a number of interesting differences among the races in their sense of humor. China, for instance, has a well-developed appreciation of ludicrous things, and in Chinese plays there is an amount of fun hardly known to us. On the other hand, Japan has shown little of the comic spirit. Russia has an acid, and sometimes brilliantly bitter, humor. Turkey loves the grotesque form of fun. Germany is sentimental in its humor, and is fond of buffoonery. Italy likes the absurd, and laughs readily at trifles. France, as is widely known, is full of light and sparkling wit. English humor is robust and vital, much of its best quality coming through Irish blood. Scotland possesses its own wit and whimsies.

Americans have developed a versatile sense of humor that seems a composite of the finest brands, but as yet we have not produced one of the supreme laughers of history to make us take heed to our follies, our shams, our extravagances. Mark Twain came the nearest to being one of these immortal mirth men, but he was too kindly to our faults. What we need is an Aristophanes, a Cervantes, or a Voltaire!

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PACKER

SPEAKING about getting South American trade," said the Latin-American representative of an Ohio works that does an international business in mining screens, "who do you suppose our most important salesman is? No, not the man on the job, who knows the language, customs, and temperament of our foreign customers.

"The shipping clerk right here in our factory is the real salesman for future orders from old customers; the man who actually makes our screens goes him one better by being the salesman on whom all future orders depend—new customers and old.

"Our sales organization doesn't begin in the office; it begins out in the factory. In our line, the shipping clerk can throw a wrench in the selling machinery quicker than any one else. He has to know how to pack foreign shipments—and they have to be packed different for every country. They must stand the smashing of rough ocean travel; he must pack them so they can be opened by customs inspectors; maybe the railroad only runs part way into the interior, and the shipment has to be carried on the backs of burros or bullocks, up mountain trails and across treacherous river fords. Ten pounds too much in a package starts trouble. Mines are usually mighty hard to get to, and that's why our shipping clerk is one of our best salesmen, and is pulling down a hundred and ten dollars a week."

GO ABROAD AT HOME

THOSE who are "going to Europe after the war" will be sadly disappointed. Everything worth seeing will have fences around it, with one-legged soldiers at the gate charging two bits admission. A trench is nothing but a ditch. You can see all the big guns you care for by going to any army post along the coast, such as Sandy Hook or Fisher's Island.

Europe is going to be one big side show of fakes for American tourists when peace comes. Everybody will be selling post cards or charging admission or telling you to "remember the guide, please."

Travel at home—now and after the war.

This country is the greatest natural tourist ground in the world. In California we have the world's oldest trees—trees that have been standing since a thousand years before Christ. Nothing in the Alps compares with the Grand Cañon of the Colorado. And in the Southwest there are deserts more wonderful than Egypt.

Europe is much like the United States—only older and cruder. Its moving-picture houses feature Charlie Chaplin. Everywhere you turn you find ads of American watches, American shaving soaps, and the like. Constantinople has a subway—even the Orient is becoming Americanized.

Why go to Europe to see America?

The Soldier's Way

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "Rimrock Jones," "Alias Bowles and the Far West," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

Dare-devil gun-runner and recruiting agent for the Mexican Army of Liberation, Beanie Bogan finds in Bruce Whittle likely material for his business. Whittle is in a condition bordering on suicide because he has lost the one girl in all the world. She had married a flabby fool named Pedley on grounds of honor rather than of love. Also, strangely enough, she and her husband had seemingly followed Whittle down to the Mexican border. Beanie Bogan persuades the lorn lover to forget the lady in the service of Mars. So Whittle becomes a member of the Foreign Legion enlisted under General Montaña. By his courage and recklessness in skirmishes, Bruce Whittle wins the fighting heart of Beanie Bogan, and a singular friendship is forged. In the important attack on Fronteras, Bogan and Whittle agree for ten thousand dollars to burn bridges and destroy railroad communications, a most desperate undertaking. To help them in the venture, General Montaña and his master of strategy, Gambolier, promise to surround the city of Fronteras, to cut off Federal pursuit. The dynamiting is accomplished successfully, but Bogan and Whittle discover themselves without the promised assistance. They are pursued by Federal cavalry, but in their flight come upon a good natural defensive position. Advantage is taken of it, and Beanie shoots with telling effect into the besieging ranks. But night is falling, and Beanie informs Whittle that the Federals will probably get them in the darkness. They escape. By means of a decoy note, Pedley, the husband of Constance, lures Whittle into a trap. Whittle, however, beats up the would-be snarer, and he and Beanie Bogan again join the ranks of the Foreign Legion. Bogan and his pal get the ten thousand dollars from Montaña, but the men of the Legion do not get their pay. A rumpus ensues. Montaña orders them out of Mexico. Then the Federalists open fire on them. They are between the devil and the deep sea, but they fight, Whittle as usual distinguishing himself for recklessness.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HEART OF BRUCE.

WHEN the faint-hearted Mexicans retired from their charge, and left the Foreign Legion unharmed, the last of Whittle's illusions were swept away, and he saw the "war" as it was. The terrifying machine of death to which he had committed himself in the hope of a speedy release was no more than a tinsel plaything, a mockery of actual war. Its generals were palterers, its soldiers were cowards, its battles mere wars of words. They rushed at each other like angry dogs, bristling and snarling and showing their teeth, and then, after each ignoble encounter, they drew off grimly and growled. But of fighting there was none—no charges, no assaults, no attacks upon the town;

only quarrels and bickerings and wasted days. And in the end Whittle picked up his gun and started off down the river.

Behind him he heard the boasts of the deserters as they bawled across to the crowd of Americans, and, with a sense of escaping from a bedlam, he hurried away by himself. What to him were the petty machinations of Gambolier, the futile negotiations of Montaña, the foolish ranting about Libery and Equality? No more than the flannel-mouthed bombast of the Legion, always talking of its rage for battle, but as carefully avoiding a fight. They were words, mere words, when what was needed was a blow, even if struck by a single man. He mounted the bank, far down the river, and looked across the plain at the town.

The Federal colonel in command at

Fronteras had been educated at the Military College of Chapultepec, and while Montaña and his advisers had been busily doing nothing he had been as busily digging trenches. Fully a mile from the plaza of the straggling town, he had thrown up his first line of defense, and behind that another, showing dimly in the distance, in which to keep his reserves. Yet between Whittle and these trenches there was a natural defense far superior to either of the Federals'—the banks of the canal which flowed, wide and deep, through the outskirts of the town. And besides there was the river bank, some ten feet high in places, extending halfway down to the bridge. Behind its shelter a man could creep far down the stream and then rise up and rake the trenches, if only he had the nerve.

Whittle stepped into the water, and waded down farther and then climbed up on the bank. What small respect he had once had for Mexican marksmanship had been dispelled by the attack of the morning, for of all the thousand bullets that had been fired at the Legion not one had found its mark. So he did not flinch when an outpost saw him and sent a bullet over his head. Another followed, and then another, so near that it made him jump. He saw the man crouching behind a mesquite tree not far from the first-line trench, and sent a bullet back. Though much of his later life had been spent in the workshop, he had learned when a boy to shoot with the best of them, and his shot struck close to its mark.

There was a lull as the Federals rose up in their trenches to see whence the shot had come—and then there came that first volley of bullets which had diverted Bogan from his salute to the flag. The bullets going past sounded like a flight of swift-winged blackbirds, so wild did the Federals shoot, and Whittle laughed for the first time in ten days. Life had been a drab affair, dragging about with Beanie Bogan or listening to the loud-mouthed Legion, but this woke the fighting spirit in his breast. They were children,

these Federals, little, scared Indian children, playing with weapons that had been made for better men, and yet Montaña and his army and the boastful Foreign Legion had been afraid to make an attack. They had hidden in the foothills, half starved and out of everything, for fear of men like these. He raised his rifle in a mocking gesture, and fired back at the Federal army.

Then they came in good earnest, but a mile too high, the whispering Mauser bullets, which, if one should happen to hit him, would pass through his vitals and on. He dropped down behind the bank, shooting back defiantly, and as he paused to refill his magazine he heard a man running up behind him. It was Tight Boots, the boy upon whom he had taken pity in their long hike back to camp, and behind him came others of the Legion, all running.

"Stay with 'em!" yelled Tight Boots, plumping down behind the bank and shoving out his .30-.30. "Stay with 'em, Dynamite; I'll stick till hell's no mo'!"

He cut loose at the trenches, and as the others came up they answered with volley for volley. Beanie Bogan came up, panting and cursing recklessly, and soon the full-mouthed bark of his .30-.40 special was added to the pop of .30-.30's. The roar from the trenches rose to battle height as the Federals replied to their volleys, but the blood lust of his ancestors had been roused in Bruce Whittle, and he jumped up and started down the river.

"Where you going?" cried Tight Boots, and, not receiving any answer, he scrambled up and followed after him.

"Come on!" he yelled back. "Who's afraid of them Mexicans? We're going to take the town!"

The Legion looked after them; then, one after the other, they went splashing on down the stream. It was not much of a river, over half of its water being diverted to fill the enormous canals, and as Whittle led the way down its wide, sandy bed he found himself the leader of the charge. So in ancient

days the patriot Robert Bruce, whose blood still ran in his veins, had charged against the enemy, and after his death his stout heart, hurled before them into the thick of the battle, still led men on.

"Heart of Bruce, lead us on!" the Scotch warriors had cried, and as his heart, incased in a casket, fell to the earth in the midst of the foes, they charged in and won it back. It was the blood now that spoke, and Whittle, the jeweler, the man who had lost his ladylove by indecision and doubt, charged in to win victory or death. He was the leader now, and bold Beanie Bogan found himself bringing up the rear.

"Hey! Wait!" he called, as Whittle climbed up the bank, where he could rake the Federal trench from end to end. "Don't shoot, boys!" he implored. "Let's make it a volley and clean 'em before they can shoot back!"

"Well, all right," agreed Whittle. "You can take charge of it now; I just came down here to start something!"

"Ah, nah, nah!" exclaimed Bogan, slapping him jovially on the back. "You pull this off yourself. What's the big idee—going to take the town? All right, I'll be your military adviser."

He climbed up the bank, where the excited soldiers were peering over at the enemy, and jerked them swiftly back.

"Keep your heads down!" he commanded. "Don't show 'em a hair until we rise up and give 'em a volley. Break the bank down first and dig in on the edge, and every man build up a good rest." He hurried down the line, placing each new man as he arrived, and at last, as he went by Whittle, he touched him and pointed up the river.

"You've started something all right," he said, and laughed himself as he went on. Whittle looked up the river, and saw a swarm of insurrectos pouring down toward the position the Legion had held, and up on the mesa overlooking the plain the big hats were bobbing everywhere. "This'll drive Pepe crazy," grinned Bogan as he came back, "but what do we care?"

He looked over the bank at the long

line of Federals, lying unconscious of their danger in the trench, and slapped the butt of his gun.

"By grab," he chuckled, "I wouldn't miss this for a hundred thousand dollars—keep your *heads* down, do you want to draw their fire? Now, stop and get your breath, and when I give the word push your guns out and aim down that trench. You've been shooting worse than Mexicans; now I want you to shoot careful. Set your sights at four hundred, and remember what that hind sight is for. You can aim now; hold 'er steady, and pick out your man. Don't pull off now; ready, fire!"

The volley ripped out, and as the dust arose along the trenches Beanie Bogan gave a wild yelp of joy.

"They're cleaned!" he cried. "Like a ditchful of rabbits! We've got 'em going, boys! Give 'em hell!"

He raised his gun, which he had held regretfully, and added his shot to the rest, and then the startled Federals broke and ran. In an instant, where before the space had been vacant, it was alive with flying men. They ran helter-skelter, throwing away their guns and bandoliers, and the Legion let out a yell. It was answered from up the river, and then from farther up, and then there came a supporting volley from the mesa, which was dotted with Montaña's men.

"Cease firing!" commanded Bogan, passing swiftly down the line. "Cease firing, you danged idiots! Do you want to draw some shrapnel? Well, keep down then, and let the insurrectos go in!"

A high Mexican yell, gaining volume every moment and punctuated by the rattle of arms, rose up from the mesa and plain, and then, while the Legión looked on in wonder, the Montañistas charged. From wherever they were, whether under the river bank or massed along the edge of the mesa, they poured out across the brushy plain and ran on toward the deserted line of trenches.

"The poor, ignorant fools!" exclaimed Beanie half pityingly. "They think they done that themselves! Well,

holy, jumping Jehu, will you look at them charge now? But oh, my, when them Federal field guns get their range!"

There was a long minute of waiting, while the unorganized insurrectos rushed forward to drop into the first trenches, and then, with a crash, a shell burst above them and struck up a long line of dust. *Boom!* spoke out the cannon from the cuartel in Fronteras, and then another and another broke loose. There was a puff of white smoke in the clear, upper air, a slash of flying shrapnel, and still another report; and for the second time the insurrectos turned and fled. They were peons from the mountains, unused to plains and cities and the terrifying cannon of the Federals, and they ran, though more from terror than from fear.

But, despite the disorderly milling to and fro of his men, there was still discipline in Montaña's camp, and scarcely had the baffled insurrectos sought shelter along the river bank when the provost guard fell upon them. Down the river they came, a double column of men commanded by dancing officers, and as they rounded up their soldiers and drove them back to camp a single officer left the rest behind and pursued the recalcitrant Legion.

"Let 'im come!" said Bogan, looking back up the river. "It's only Gambolier. But what shall we say, boys, when he orders us back? Shall we quit now or go take the town?"

"Take the town!" they yelled in a chorus of cheers, and Beanie regarded them with a fatherly smile.

"Well said, me brave byes," he observed, relapsing into Irish. "And the way I feel now, with me belly shrunk to nahthing, I would fight the whole bloody garrison for one dish of tortillas and beans."

He plunged into the water, and, despite the shouts of Gambolier, led the famished Legion down the stream. But though he gave the orders, as father of the company and by virtue of his service as sergeant, he accorded to Bruce Whittle the place of honor as leader of the advance. Their position

now was desperate, with the Federals before them and the hostile insurrectos in the rear, but the wine of victory had given them new strength, and they were marching hopefully toward the tortillas and beans. As to just how a company of forty-four men could take Fronteras in time for supper the rank and file was a bit hazy, but Beanie Bogan had led many a forlorn hope, and they followed him with absolute confidence. And bravest of the brave, for he felt no fear of death, was the man with the heart blood of Bruce. They called him Dynamite, after the bridges he had wrecked, and at last he felt that his hour was coming. Here was the desperate attack, the heroic assault, that he had dreamed of and desired for a month, and he led on like the Bruce of old.

At a point down the river, where a goat trail climbed the bank, the Legion crept up and looked across at the town. *Pow!* went a Mauser, and as the Federals saw their enemies so close upon them they opened up a veritable fusillade. But the men of the Legion were trained to close shooting as well as to keeping cover, and more than one white-capped *pelon*, rising up to find his target, was struck down by their well-aimed bullets. Yet hardly had this second long-range skirmish begun when Gambolier came panting up from behind. He was white with rage, for Montaña's peace negotiations—which were at that moment being carried on over a special wire direct to the city of Mexico—had been brought to a standstill by this precipitate attack, and if it kept on—if these scapegraces persisted—the last hope of peace was lost.

"Cease firing!" shouted Gambolier, whipping out his sword and rushing up to the men. "Cease firing immediately! By order of General Montaña!"

"Who's he?" inquired McCafferty, looking up from his sniping, and then he cuddled his face against the stock. *Bang!* spoke out his Springfield, and as he worked the bolt Big Bill stuck his tongue in his cheek. "Never mind!" he observed, while the rest turned to listen. "Sure, we mean no disrespect

at all! But our backs is bruck with packing these heavy cartridges, and we're shooting the brutes away!"

"Sergeant Bogan!" appealed Gambolier, turning to the grinning Bogan, who was directing the fire from behind. "Please order your men to stop. General Montaña is in the midst of some very delicate negotiations which may lead to far-reaching results, but if the Federal commander should report this attack it might destroy our last prospect of peace."

"I'm a soldier," answered Bogan. "What do I care about peace? We're going in to take the town!"

"Ah, but listen!" cried Gambolier in an agony of impatience. "You must—you must make them stop! Name your price—any reward—but positively—absolutely—this firing must instantly cease!"

"I haven't got any price!" returned Beanie sourly, and hunched up against the bank. The moment had come which he hardly dared hoped for, when he would have the tricky Gambolier in his power, and now he was enjoying it to the utmost. Along the edge of the broken-down bank the roistering members of the Legion were laughing and shouting as they shot. No one had been injured, there was nothing to detract, and Gambolier only added to their joy. Even the silent Whittle, who had before seemed so quiet, was a leader in the fighting. Gambolier looked them over, to find a single one he could appeal to, and then he turned back to Bogan.

"Sergeant Bogan," he warned, "I will hold you personally responsible if you do not stop this firing at once."

"But I *told* 'em to stop," complained Beanie, grinning maliciously, "and they told me to go to blazes. Why don't you stop 'em yourself?"

"I will!" exclaimed Gambolier, with military decision, and, drawing his sword, he slapped the nearest man on the rump.

"Cease firing!" he commanded, passing swiftly down the line. "Cease firing, sir! And you! And you!"

There was stunned and startled si-

lence; then Big Bill got up and grabbed their ex-commander from behind.

"Hey!" he said, jerking him down behind the bank and wresting away the castigating sword. "Who called you in on this? Now you beat it—understand? And tell Pepe Montaña we're trying to earn that dollar."

He gave him a start, and threw his side arm after him, but Gambolier whirled about before he fled to hurl back a parting threat.

"You'll pay for this!" he burst out spitefully. "I've warned you, and that's enough. Now if you don't cease firing, I will call out our troops and have you shot down from behind!"

He raced off up the river, thin and spidery in his riding boots, and the grin left Bogan's face.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOR THE TORTILLAS AND BEANS.

The sinister figure of Colonel Gambolier had hardly disappeared up the river when the vigilant Beanie Bogan, who had been watching his flight, called Whittle from where he was firing.

"There they come!" he said, pointing at a line of high hats that was rapidly advancing toward them. "Now what are you going to do?"

"Well, who are they?" asked Whittle. "They may be our friends; I certainly wouldn't fire on them."

"Don't you think they're our friends," returned Bogan; "this is the regular Mexican stuff. They're coming down here to arrest us. Yes, look at that dastard in front, holding up his hand for peace; they never can play the game straight."

He glared at them a minute; then, as they came within earshot, he shouted at them fiercely to stop.

"*No tira!*" shrielled the Mexicans, still making the peace sign, and once more they came hurrying on.

"Go on back there!" yelled Beanie, leaping out into the open and waving them back with his gun, but the Mexicans were hard to stop.

"No! *No tira!*" they called, as the Legion ceased firing and lined up to re-

pel an attack. "Amigos! *Muy amigos!*"

"Amigos nothing!" cursed Bogan. "It's a guard of them high hats that Gambolier's sent down to arrest us! Well, come on, Whit, you're running the bunch. Shall we shoot 'em up or not?"

"No, let 'em come," answered Whittle, with sudden decision. "They can't arrest us, anyway."

"*Vaya sel!*" roared Beanie. "Get back there, you danged greasers! I'm going to drop a bullet in front of them."

"I'll tell you," cried Whittle. "Let's go on down the river and dare 'em to come and get us. That's a fair test, boys, and while we're about it we'll rake that second line of trenches."

He splashed off down the stream, and once more the Legion tagged on in spite of itself. Whittle was nothing to them—he was not even a trained soldier—but when he led off they could not help but follow, and Bogan came on, grumbling, behind. He was an old campaigner, and he knew all too well that bravery alone counts for nothing; yet with his partner in the lead he dared not interfere, for Whittle had rebuked them all by his courage. So he lingered in the rear, menacing the Mexicans with his rifle, until at last they fell behind. The Legion turned a point and plunged into a willow thicket, and when they came out on the other side they could see the international bridge below them.

"Ah, here now!" burst out Bogan as they were about to advance. "This is grand, boys; this is noble, but you can't charge right in and take that town. It's all right, under this bank, but when we step out into the open them machine guns will mow us down. We've got to have leadership and military discipline or we'll go out like the other boys at Villa Nueva."

"That's right," agreed Whittle, turning back from the lead. "You go ahead, Beanie, and we'll do whatever you say."

"Oh, nah, nah!" protested Bogan, as the Legion acclaimed him. "It ain't that I want to lead—but I saw 'em all killed in less than a minute, and I got these

three wounds here myself." He pointed to his breast, where the machine gun had creased him, and blinked as the Legion stood silent. "We're in a whale of a fix, boys," he went on earnestly as the soldiers gathered about him, "and I'd hate to see you wiped out like that. But if you'll follow my orders—what I learned then and since—I believe we can take the town. But think it over, and remember this: If you start out with me on this flyer, I don't want any man to turn back. They's some of you here in the U. S. uniform, deserters from the United States army, and I'd take shame to think that any American soidier had run away from a Mex. So think it over, and all in favor will hold up your hand good and high."

The hands shot up, for the Legion was with him, and Bogan's eyes gleamed with pride.

"Well and good," he said. "And if you follow my orders, we'll make Mexican the court language of hell."

Sending back a rear guard to observe the insurrectos, and dividing his men into rough squads, Sergeant Bogan beckoned Whittle, and they crept off together to view the approaches to the town. The high bank of the river, which had given them shelter, here flattened to a low, mud slope; but across a field of corn there rose the bank of the canal, piled high with thrown-out silt, leading down between the river and the town. And on the farther side, striking the arc of a circle just outside the first scattered huts, was the Federals' second line of intrenchments.

"It's a cinch!" declared Bogan, turning hastily back. "But what the devil is that?"

A few scattering shots from up the river merged suddenly into a fusillade, and as they crouched down in the willows the Federals in the second line of trenches opened up with a smashing volley. Then the rear guard came running, their faces all agrin, and Beanie called his men to arms.

"Ah, that's it!" he said as the guard reported. "Them fellers was a bunch of fighting insurrectos that had broke loose and gone to it like us. And I'll

bet a dollar," he burst out suddenly, "that they're led by Numero Tres. That was him up in front, the dad-burned Indian, trying to flag us by making the peace sign! Well, in we go, boys! This is pretty lucky for everybody except them Federals. We'll slip across the cornfield to the canal and rake their trenches while they're busy with Number Three, and after that—oh, Judas, come on; we got to get in on this!"

A steady roll of rifle fire was coming from the trenches, and as they went wriggling like snakes through the corn rows, leaving a wake of waving tops where they passed, the soldiers at the guardhouse which defended the bridge-head opened up on the insurrectos. Yet hardly were they installed against the bank of the ditch when the Federals at the bridge made them out, and the flight of bullets which had been going over their heads came slashing into the dirt.

"Into the ditch!" commanded Bogan as the men began to flinch, and, springing up from cover, he leaped recklessly over the bank. The Legion went after him, their breath held for swimming, but the wide-flowing canal had gone dry. It seemed a miracle at the time, though some wily insurrecto had merely turned off the water at the head gate, but the soldiers did not stop to wonder. They scrambled down the bank and up the other side, and, thrusting out their guns, drew down on the line of shooting Federals. The trench began not far from them, on the edge of the town, and swung in a slight curve across the plain, and within it they saw the soldiers in their white caps and uniforms huddled down like rabbits in a hutch.

"Pick your man!" called out Bogan as they leveled their guns, and when their volley ripped out every soldier in the trench leaped up. Some were hit, some scared, some still flighty from the panic which had driven them from the first line of intrenchments; but as the volley of bullets raked the length of their shelter every man sprang up and fled. It was a rout, a stampede,

a wild rush for safety, and the Legion emptied its guns into the mass.

"Cease firing!" ordered Bogan as the last frightened Federals fled before the lash of their bullets. "Cease firing and follow me down the ditch!" But not a man stirred; the blood lust had taken hold of them, and they lingered for shot after shot.

"Fall in!" he yelled as a sudden splash of bullets threw the dust up in their faces, and then as a bullet came down the ditch, he swung his rifle and struck the flats of their feet. That fetched them up standing, but as he started down the canal bed, running free on the firm, wet sand, a fusillade of shots broke out before them, and the bullets came bouncing up the ditch. One man went down, his foot struck out from under him by the smash of a ricochet shot, and then at a volley Bogan leaped up the bank and fell flat on the other side. The Legion followed, burrowing down into the sand and rank weeds, where fresh bullets seemed to search them out. Like angry hornets whose nest has been stoned, the Federals came swarming down the causeway from the town, and an outburst of firing from the guardhouse by the bridge made one side of the canal bank as bad as the other. Bogan thrust out his gun, and began firing down the ditch, where the Federals had raked them from a bridge, but the battle was unequal, and the Legion was giving ground when Bruce Whittle leaped up from his place.

Across the flat, between them and the guardhouse, there stood a long, low adobe house, a fortress in itself, and while the Legion looked doubtfully after him he rose up and made a run for it. The time had come for which he had longed, when he could put his courage to the test, and as the bullets zipped by him or tore up the ground he charged straight into the storm of gunfire.

For the moment he was a target for every Federal who had a cartridge in his gun, but a great strength, an elation, bore him on through the hail until his feet seemed barely to touch the

ground. He was flying through the air, spurning the earth behind him, and the goal was not far ahead.

The door of the house, painted a violent Mexican blue, stood out against the gray walls like the entrance to a haven of refuge. A bullet smashed into the doorframe, and little puffs of dirt were struck out from the mud of the wall, and then he sprang against the door. It gave the length of a doubled chain, which was padlocked about the frame, and as he fell back, baffled, a glancing bullet struck his rifle and knocked it from his hand. He rose up, dazed, and then a man dashed by him and shook the door to its moorings. Another and another, as fast as they came, went smashing against the frame until at last Helge Wahlgren, the Terrible Swede, came hurtling like a battering-ram and fell, door and all, inside the house. In a wild rush they went over him, and when the scramble was past twenty men were safely inside. The rest were gone, lost somewhere in the storm of bullets which was beating outside their fort, searching out every crevice to get them.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LEGION'S ANSWER.

While the Foreign Legion, against orders, against reason, and all the known rules of military strategy, was fighting its way down the river in quest of tortillas and beans, another anomaly, quite as rare in military circles, was being enacted before Montaña's camp. General Montaña, who had marched with his Army of Liberation to batter down the gates of Fronteras, was taking the guns from the hands of his soldiers and sending them to camp under guard. The insurrecto attack, so impotent and ill-advised, and so barren of any results, was cut short by the command of their chief, and as they withdrew, disgruntled and protesting, the Americans were left to their fate. They had disobeyed their orders, and been discharged from the army, and their valor could not plead for them now.

Within the mud walls of the lone adobe house, Beanie Bogan found less than twenty men. The rest had fallen out in the rush down the ditch, and now they were lost to the Legion. Where they were no one knew, nor could they stop to inquire, for their shelter had become a target for many guns. From the guardhouse by the bridge the bullets came in volleys, thudding spitefully against the thick walls, and from a barricade up the main street the spitting muzzle of a machine gun added its torrent of flying lead. Yet no shots spat back in answer, for Bogan was counting his cartridges, while his sharpshooters dug loopholes through the walls.

"Let 'em shoot!" he said. "And when they've had their fling we'll show 'em a little marksmanship. We're short, boys!" he announced. "Ain't got thirty rounds apiece—and when that's gone we're done for. So yqu that can't shoot give to them that can and save ten apiece for a rush."

He passed about the walls of the darkened room, doling out the spare cartridges to his best marksmen, and then he took his post by a loophole. It commanded the street from which the machine gun belched, and he aimed long before he ventured a shot.

"Wan!" he crooned, relapsing into Irish. "I beaned 'im, the son of a goat!" He waited patiently, while his men lay and watched him, and then once more he shot. "Two!" he counted. "Take your time to it, Helge; we've put that machine gun on the bum!"

"Then vy not make a run for it?" demanded Helge from his loophole. "Dey ain't nothing to eat in dis house!"

"Wait till night comes," returned Beanie soothingly. "And if the other boys don't come, we'll try to make a git-away across the river."

"Yes, and get sent to Leavenworth!" answered Helge, the deserter, but Bogan only grunted.

Outside the house, where the noon-day sun beat down, the bullets still thudded and pinged, but as he made his rounds, peering out through each loophole, Bogan let out a yell of joy.

"Here come the boys!" he cried. "Big Bill and all the rest of them! And there's some Mexicans tagging along behind. It must be Numero Tres and his bunch!"

A mad outburst of firing from the bank of the river announced the insurrecto approach, and, well to the front, but crouching low, Beanie could see McCafferty and his soldiers and the irrepressible Tight Boots. Farther back up the river, the high hats of the insurgents bobbed and ducked as they advanced down the stream, and from across the Rio Grande, where the Americans looked on, he could hear a high Texas cheer.

"Here we are, Bill!" he yelled, waving a rag out the window, and then, grabbing up his gun, he made a dash for the door. "Ah, come on!" he cried. "Let's go out and at 'em! The dastards are beginning to run!"

He plunged through the doorway, his face all agrin, but Helge was out before him. Behind him came the rest, scarcely heeding the bullets, rushing headlong for the guardhouse by the bridge. From far up in town a machine gun broke loose, spraying the flat with a torrent of lead, but the Legion seemed to hold a charmed life. A few scattered shots spat out from the guardhouse as they began their unpremeditated assault, but when they gained the entrance the garrison was in full flight, leaving behind their guns and their dead.

At last the reckless Americans, starved and harried and driven about, had a shelter from the wrath of their enemies, and a source of food and supplies. While outside the brick guardhouse the bullets lashed the treetops and went skittering along the causeway to the bridge, Helge Wahlgren charged the kitchen, where the Federals had abandoned their dinner, and Bogan searched the quarters for cartridges. Then Big Bill McCafferty and his band of men came storming in under cover of the causeway, and from across the river, where the Americans were watching, there came a mighty cheer.

It was sweet to their ears after their

battling and outlawry, and, even though Big Bill had left two of his men sorely wounded in his hurried retreat, the Legion gave an answering yell. Then with eating and drinking and caring for the wounded, the hours were quickly sped, and as even came on Numero Tres crept in grimly, followed by a remnant of his fighting men. They had been hiding in the willows, sniping across at the Federals, who lay behind barricades of sandbags on the flat-roofed houses of the town, but a machine gun on the cathedral had searched out their shelter and driven most of them up the river in retreat. Yet Number Three was satisfied; he had escaped Montaña's provost guard, and the night would bring fighting for them all. Bogan greeted him cordially, for there was work for all of them if the town was to be stormed that night, and the hungry insurrectos were led to the kitchen while he perfected his plans for the attack.

The Federal fire had ceased abruptly—upon notice from the American commander at the bridge that bullets were coming into Del Norte—and as night came on an ominous silence settled down over battle-scarred Fronteras. On the American side the vast crowds of people, who had resisted all efforts to force them back, now dispersed on account of darkness, and as the danger seemed past the officer of the guard allowed a single man to go across the line. All day, while the machine guns had raked the bridge, and the Mausers had spattered the town, the iron-faced regulars had stood at their post and turned back every man who applied; but when Gambolier, as a messenger of peace, appeared and stated his case, the officer of the guard passed him on with a heartfelt sigh of relief. Hence Beanie Bogan's surprise when, as he was marshaling his men, Gambolier stepped in upon them.

He was stern, yet not too stern, and in the depths of his eyes there was a flicker of light that betokened uncertainty and fear. He faced once more the fighting Foreign Legion, which had been dismissed by Montaña in disgrace,

and yet, single-handed, had raked two lines of trenches and driven the Federals before them. It had been a great victory—but not for Montaña. Instead, his prestige and that of his army had suffered a terrible blow, and his negotiations with President Reyes, in spite of his best efforts, had been brought to the verge of failure. But one thing could save them—to recall this fighting Legion, and nip the impending battle in the bud.

"Gentlemen," began Gambolier as they gazed at him in astonishment. "I bring a message from General Montaña."

"Garn!" cried Big Bill, motioning him away with his gun. "We got no use for him nor you."

"Well, what is it?" demanded Bogan, cutting short the impending wrangle. "Shut up, Bill, and let him spit it out."

"General Montaña wishes me to notify you," announced Gambolier solemnly, "that you have committed an invasion of Mexico, the penalty of which is death."

"Aw, cripes!" burst out Bill, but Bogan met his eye and he relapsed into mutinous mutterings.

"But," went on Gambolier, with a reassuring smile, "he has given his word—if you will desist from this attack and return forthwith to his camp—to pay you in full for all your back time and take you back into his service. Otherwise you are filibusters in the worst sense of the word and subject to instant execution."

"How do you figure that out?" inquired Bogan after the hotheads had had their say.

"In this way," returned Gambolier, as they hushed their clamor to listen. "You are no longer in Montaña's service. You were formally discharged at the river this morning and warned to depart from Mexico. But instead you began an attack upon this city, which he had forbidden under pain of death, and, in returning your fire, Federal bullets have crossed the boundary and killed half a score of Americans. For that reason you have been outlawed by

the United States government, and the president has given orders that you shall be dealt with with the greatest severity, and General Montaña has given formal notice that he will grant you no quarter when caught. But in spite of all this, because of the past services of the Foreign Legion, General Montaña still offers you his complete forgiveness if you will immediately surrender to me."

"And if we don't?" challenged Bogan, as his men fell to muttering. "What will General Montaña do then?"

"He will order his men," answered Gambolier impressively, "to close in and take you from behind. And to make your punishment more certain he will declare a truce with the Federals until the last man has been captured or killed."

"Oh!" said Bogan, and by the dim light of captured candles he gazed at the faces of his men. For a day and a night they had been marching and fighting and suffering endless hardships, and yet they were still set and grim. They would not yield easily, and, coming from Gambolier, the threat had been received with bad grace. He it was who had framed up the false start to Chulita in order to get them out of the way, and now, once more, he stood before them with a threat of instant death. Yet if Montaña made good his threat—if, under cover of night, he sent his troops down the river to cut off their escape from the town—they would be left in desperate straits. And Pedro Espinosa and his outraged bandits would gladly undertake such a task.

"Well, boys," began Beanie, "you've heard the proposition. Now what do you want to do?"

"Take the town!" roared Helge Wahlgren, his voice hoarse with anger. "We can do it—and vip Montaña, too!"

"And you, amigos?" inquired Bogan, turning to Numero Tres and his friends. "If we attack the town, Montaña says he will kill us; but if not, he will take us back. What answer shall we send?"

"*Muchachos!*" cried out Numero

Tres, springing forward to face his men, and for five minutes or more, while the Americans looked on glumly, he gesticulated and shouted in Spanish. He pointed to the brand, burned into his cheek by Bracamonte, and shook his hard fist toward the town; then he made terrible motions of men stabbed with bayonets as he denounced Bracamonte's slaying of the wounded, and, when he had ended, the excitable Mexicans declared as one man for war.

"Well, you see," said Bogan, turning to Gambolier, "these here Mexicans will be glad to have our help. And if we throw in with Numero Tres—ain't he a Mexican citizen? And then where's that filibuster stuff?"

"Hah! A mere handful of peons! An outlawed Yaqui Indian!" answered Gambolier, with a scornful shrug. "But if you like them for company—Montaño will kill them, too. I offer you general amnesty, and two hundred dollars a month, with back pay."

He stood, smiling cynically as the adventurous Americans suddenly burst into a quarrel among themselves, and then there was a shouting outside the door. The guard made way, and into their midst burst the long-lost Jimmy Sullivan. He was dripping with water, and his carroty red hair was plastered down to his face, and across his shoulders he carried a heavy sack.

"Here's some cartridges!" he grinned, dropping the sack at Bogan's feet. "The boys sent 'em—to shoot in your Springfields. And you'll need 'em," he added, "because Pedro Espinosa was starting down the river when I left."

"Oh, he was, eh?" observed Bogan, grabbing up the sack of cartridges and passing them hastily around. "Say, somebody give Jimmy a Springfield!"

"And my answer?" demanded Gambolier, as Beanie hustled past him. "What message shall I take to Montaño?"

"Give 'im that," said Beanie, thrusting a cartridge into his hand, "and tell 'im to come and get us!"

CHAPTER XVI.

REMEMBER BUCK O'DONNELL!

The news which Jimmy Sullivan brought destroyed the last hope of peace; it was war now, and war to the knife. Jimmy had been hiding all day in the willows, begging and filching the spare cartridges of the guard while he kept a jealous eye on his enemies. Within that category he now numbered Montaño, as well as the shifty Gambolier and the gorilla-faced Pedro Espinosa, and he had greeted with unholy glee the reverses that had attended the insurrectos. But when, at nightfall, he saw Pedro Espinosa and his men moving stealthily off down the river he rose up and followed after them.

Of Montaño's threats against the Foreign Legion he was fully informed by the guards; but this furtive expedition under cover of darkness meant but one thing from Prickly Pete. Rather than sack Fronteras, rather even than kill Bracamonte, and throw him to the dogs in the street, Espinosa would give up his last hope of heaven for revenge on the Foreign Legion. Three times in one day he had been baffled and humiliated by them; but now, with the orders of Montaño behind him, he was marching to take them into custody. That might be difficult, while they were still at full strength; but in the morning, after they had been broken by the machine-gun fire of the Federals, it would not be such a difficult task. So reasoned Espinosa as he marched down the river, but already Jimmy Sullivan, with his heavy bag of cartridges, was on his way to the bridge.

With enemies on all sides, and the net drawing tighter that would snatch them away to prison, the Foreign Legion felt a sudden gust of joy at the desperate alternative that lay before them. To slip forth into the night and rush the town, to fight from door to door until the cuartel or cathedral was theirs, and then, in a glorious man-to-man struggle, to go down fighting against odds or be hailed the conquerors of the city! It was a vision to make them forget all else. But if his men

forgot, in the joys of anticipation, Beanie Bogan most certainly did not. Behind brave Buck O'Donnell he had marched into Villa Nueva, only to be mowed down by the masked machine guns of the Federals, and this time he laid his plans with great care.

First he beckoned to Numero Tres, and spoke to him long and earnestly before he sent him gliding off into the night, and, while he was waiting for his scout to return, he gave his orders and announced the watchword for the night. Every man was required to wear white bands on his sleeves to prevent mistakes of identity in the dark, and the watchword that was whispered from man to man was: "Remember Buck O'Donnell!" Bogan divided his men into three separate companies, each commanded by a seasoned soldier, and when Numero Tres came back, having located the Federal outposts, he explained his plan of attack.

"Now, here's the dope, boys," he said as they stood waiting in the half darkness, "and remember every word I say. McCafferty will stay here with his platoon of men to take care of Pedro Espinosa; Numero Tres and the Mexicans will slip down below the town, and start shooting when the moon comes up, and then, when the Federals show where they are hid, the rest of us will rush the town. After that it'll be every bunch for itself, but lay off on the drinking and loot. We'll get no quarter if we ever get caught, so we might as well go in to win.

"Stawano, Numero Tres," he nodded to the Yaqui. "And remember *cuando sale la luna!*"

He made a motion of the moon rising up, and the Yaqui and his warriors filed out. They were picked fighting men, each with some grievance against Bracamonte or the Federals, who held the town, and they rolled their eyes at Bogan and his comrades in promise of wild work to come. The last firing had ceased, and as they slipped off through the shadows not a single shot gave the alarm. The white houses of Fronteras lay dark-shadowed and deserted, abandoned by their frightened

inhabitants and left unlighted by the treacherous Federals, yet somewhere on those housetops there were machine guns and watchful riflemen, waiting silently for the expected attack. Bogan picked up his rifle; then, exchanging grins with Big Bill, he led off through the starlit night.

To Whittle, who followed at his heels, it seemed strangely beautiful and calm; such a night indeed as a man would choose on which to end his earthly career. Already in the east there was a faint, silvery glow where the moon, near its full, soon would rise, and in the black shadows of the cottonwoods, where they skulked now like lesser shadows, a mystic peace and quiet seemed to dwell. The men followed noiselessly along the bank of the causeway which led from the bridge into town, and far ahead, a dark bulk across the highway, lay the silent barricade of the Federals. Behind that solid fort of railroad ties and sandbags the machine guns were leveled and waiting, and when they made their rush, as rush they must, the street would be swept with bullets. They would come, perhaps, as they had at Villa Nueva, mowing them down like standing grain, or, if Beanie should lead them unharmed through the storm, then death would take some other form. But it was there, the great Consoler, whose swift, still hand had brought peace to many an aching heart.

They moved down to the low bridge where the canal crossed the road, and there their progress was stopped; for some other insurrecto, perhaps under orders, had opened up the head gate at the dam. The ditch was full, flowing wide and deep, and Bogan cursed under his breath. He held up his hand, and while they lay behind the bank he crept up and inspected the bridge. It was flat and open, without railing or buttress, and he knew without a doubt that the guns of the Federals were trained to sweep its approach. It was a death trap, open and waiting, but Beanie was not seeking for death.

He drew back and waited, and as

the moon tipped the east a rifle shot rang out below the town. Another answered, there was a rattle, a volley, and then a machine gun broke loose.

Spat! Spat! Hrrrr—rup! it ripped, and the Americans rose for the rush. Yet still Bogan beckoned them back with his hand and crouched behind the bank. A chorus of yells rose above the fusillade, and then in a sudden outburst the shooting rose to battle height. A bugle sounded from the distant cuartel, dark forms flitted across the city streets, and then Bogan pointed toward the town. In the first touch of moonlight, standing clear against the sky, the housetops were dotted with men; not a man here and there, but always in squads, until some officer, brandishing his sword in the air, rose up to beat them down.

"Now—low!" commanded Beanie, and, crouching almost to the ground, he scuttled across the bridge. Whittle followed, and then another man, their khaki-colored clothes hardly showing against the road, and then they rushed for the town. A lone house gave them shelter, then the shadow of a fence, and as firing burst out from the housetops they plunged into a narrow *callejon*. It was a pathway, an alley, crooked and lined with low mud houses, and as his men came rushing up behind him Bogan charged boldly into the town. The machine guns at the barricade broke out with a belated rattle, rifles crashed from the roofs on both sides, but so swiftly did they pass that Beanie had burst through a doorway before the first bullets sought them out.

It was a two-story building, standing at the corner of a cross street much more pretentious than the gloomy *callejon*, and, stumbling through the darkness, Bogan ran up two stairways and dragged himself out on the roof. Whittle followed, his blood pounding hard, and others were close behind. They were chuckling with joy at the success of their venture, carried away by the madness of the game, and with the eagerness of hunters they shoved out their guns and joined in the general fusillade. On a housetop below

them, over the ground they had just passed, was a huddle of dark, soldier forms, still firing at the last of their men, but at the first slash of return bullets they broke in a panic, and the Americans sought out other marks.

In the confusion of the attack none of the Federals knew friend from foe, but with Bogan and his men there was no doubt or uncertainty—all the rest, the whole city, was against them. Upon roof after roof along the *callejon* there appeared forms with white bands on their arms, and as the rattle of their guns was added to the others the Federals broke for cover. Some dashed down the street toward the center of the town, and some lay dead on the roofs, but most of them ducked into the houses beneath and crouched there to weather the storm.

"Cease firing!" commanded Bogan, and as their own rifles were stilled the noise of the night reached their ears. From the lower part of town, where Numero Tres and his band had started their mimic war, there was an uproar so violent and pierced with "vivas!" as to suggest a veritable battle. But from the guardhouse by the bridge, where Big Bill and his men had remained as a reluctant rear guard, there was not a single shot, and soon, running madly, they came pounding up the alley and dodged into the houses on both sides. There was shouting to and fro, a rapid exchange of challenges, and then, leaving outposts to protect them from any surprise, the Legion swarmed into the big house.

Not a man was injured, though several were missing on sniping expeditions along the roofs, and the clamor was for an instant advance.

"On to the cathedral!" they cried. "To the plaza—to the cuartel! To the customhouse—and loot!"

To the customhouse! That was the great cry, for for a month they had heard of its hoarded treasures—of money and jewels and Chinese opium, worth more than its weight in gold.

"Come on!" yelled Jimmy Sullivan, all aquiver to begin plundering. "Who's with me? I'll lead the way!"

"You will not!" returned Beanie Bogan, thrusting him roughly aside. "You talk like you'd took the town. What about them big guns on the top of the cathedral, if we don't get 'em covered before morning? One shell from that mortar, and the inside of the customhouse would be a chowder of you and your loot. No! Don't make no mistake! We take that cathedral to-night or to-morrow we go up in smoke!"

"Well, come on, then!" raged Sullivan. "Hurry up! Git a move on! Them Mexicans are taking the town!"

"What Mexicans?" demanded Beanie.

"Why, Number Three and his outfit! They're danged near up to the bull ring!"

"Well, good for Number Three," answered Beanie quietly, "but no Mex is going to take this town. That calls for intellect and military strategy, and neither you nor a Mex has got either. We're up against artillery and discipline and machine guns, and all we've got is nerve and good shooting. But if you do what I tell you, and keep under cover, it's an even break we win."

"Aw, I'm going!" cried Sullivan, and he was making a break for the door when a sudden blow landed him in a heap.

"You're not!" returned Bogan, taking away his gun and beckoning to two stalwart men. "You're under arrest, and the next time I hit you it won't be no little tap." He breathed on his knuckles, and glanced about inquiringly, but no one else questioned his authority.

"Well and good," he said, "but while I'm in command I'll speak to no buck soldier twice. Now stay where you are while I go up on the roof, and I'll lead you as far as you'll go."

The house where they were gathered was a deserted Mexican grocery, and as Beanie scanned the city and made the rounds of his sentries the Legion got its first taste of loot. The shelves of the store were lined with canned goods—peaches and pears and

roast beef and baked beans—and when Bogan came back he found them fully fortified to march into the jaws of death. But all was quiet now; the firing had died down suddenly, and the city lay holding its breath. Along streets and alleys lurking forms dodged and darted or plunged with alarm into doorways, but the tramp of soldiers' feet and the sound of guns and bugles had ceased as if by magic. Yet Fronteras was not taken; the wily Federals had merely reset their traps, and were waiting for the Legion's next move.

They slipped out the door silently, whisked swiftly across the side street, and started for the Calle Refugio. This was the main street of the city, broad and paved and lined with stores, but as he peered up and down it from the shelter of a dark alley Beanie Bogan backed up precipitately.

"Nah, nah!" he muttered as the impetuous ones tried to crowd him. "She's too quiet; it don't look good to me. Say, quit your pushing! Well, take that, then, you crazy, danged fool! Do you want to shove me out into that moonlight?"

The recalcitrant one this time was the Texas boy, Tight Boots, and even the blow failed to stop him.

"There's the customhouse!" he proclaimed in a loud stage whisper, stepping daringly out into the street, and Bogan jerked him back with an oath.

"Say, stay back there, will ye?" he commanded threateningly. "There'll be no looting this night. And we'll not cross that street, customhouse or no customhouse; it's lighted up like day!"

"Ah, go on! Make a run for it!" protested the soldiers along the alley, and Beanie threw up his hands.

"All right," he said, "if you boys don't like my leadership! I've quit now—got somebody you like!"

"I'll cross it!" spoke up Sullivan, advancing confidently to the street corner, but Tight Boots pushed him back. "You will not!" he laughed, and darted from the darkness across the moon-struck street.

"Come on!" cried Sullivan, turning to face the eager soldiers, but they did

not step out into the street. As they crowded to the curb a machine gun tore the night with its crash of spitting shells, and Tight Boots, the daredevil, went down in a heap, shot to pieces by a hundred bullets. So fierce was the storm of concentrated fire that it rolled him over and over down the street, until at last it left him, a huddled heap, a lone black shadow in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FALL OF EL CLUB.

"Now you know it," spoke up Bogan as his trembling men stood staring at the body of Tight Boots. "Them machine guns were up on El Club."

"Let's git 'em!" they quavered, trying to shake off their terror. "Let's go in and kill the last one of 'em."

"Now you're talking," said Beanie, and, leaving the grisly sight behind him, he led them, stunned and silent, through the shadows. They were chastened now by the sternest of teachers, the lightning-swift hand of death, which hovered over every street to clutch them. Tight Boots had dared to question the judgment of Sergeant Bogan, won in many a hard-fought battle, and now, without compassion for his youth and spirit, death had snatched him from their midst. Jimmy Sullivan hung his head, and brushed close to the wall as they glided up dimly lighted streets, and even Bruce Whittle, who thought he sought for death, turned cold and sick with fear.

They went back up the alley, flitting like ghosts across the side streets, until Bogan turned west toward El Club. The club, that same disreputable gambling house in which Whittle had lost his poor stakes, stood but two blocks up the Calle Refugio, a two-story brick structure at the intersection of a cross street and surrounded by lower houses. From its sandbagged roof the Federal machine guns commanded the approach to the plaza, shooting east along the Calle Refugio and north along the intersecting street, the Calle Cinco de Mayo. The plaza itself, with its tow-

ering cathedral and bastioned prison and cuartel, stood on the summit of a low hill or bench of ground that rose against the sky to the west.

There the soldiers were quartered with their field guns and mortars, and machine guns on the roof of the church, but all was quiet there, for the soldiers on El Club had twice shown that they needed no help.

Being a soldier of experience, Sergeant Bogan did not overlook the fact that the plaza could dominate the town, but the club, with its machine guns and rattling Mausers, must be stormed and taken first. While his men still shuddered at the death of Tight Boots and made threats of speedy revenge, his mind leaped ahead to the taking of the club and the problem of carrying the town. Creeping west along an alley, now challenged by some stray dog, now startled by a shadow which seemed suddenly to give up men, he made his way to the Calle Cinco de Mayo, and peered cautiously up the street. The rising moon threw a sharp, black shadow down the middle of the pavement, but on the opposite side, where its rays were unobstructed, every rock and stick stood out.

"Nope, don't like it," grumbled Beanie, but as he was turning away a movement caught his eye. He ducked back, and then, lying down on the ground, he thrust out his head again. In the black shadow down the street, the other way from the club and cutting off their retreat to the river, a Mexican hat bobbed and swayed about as its owner moved cautiously toward them; and behind it appeared a second and a third and a fourth. At an alley where the moonlight struck across the blackness of the shadow the Mexicans stepped quickly across, and as the touch of light revealed the guns in their hands Bogan passed the word to his men. He was just turning back to lead a hasty retreat when the machine guns on the El Club opened fire.

Hrrr-rap! they ripped out, and the Calle Cinco de Mayo was suddenly a hornet's nest of bullets. For the space of a minute the dust rose in the street

as if invisible hands struck it up, and then as abruptly it stopped.

"Insurrectos!" announced Bogan, running back up the alley. "Come on, it may be Espinosa!"

He dodged down a cross street, darted across into a shadow, and plunged headlong into a house, but as the Legion followed after him, butting swiftly into doorways, a voice cried after them:

"Buck O'Donnell!"

"Who's that?" challenged McCafferty, who was bringing up the rear.

"Socorro!" implored the voice, and up the dark alley came running a frightened Mexican. His hat was gone as well as his gun, but he had white bands on his arms.

"Ay, amigos!" he wailed, and then in a torrent of Spanish he poured out his message of woe. Numero Tres had led his men up the Calle Cinco de Mayo on his way to attack the cuartel, and then, like the wind, the bullets had come among them and killed every man but himself.

"There's somebody alive yet," observed Beanie grimly as a .30-.30 spoke out from a roof, and then in a volley the machine guns answered, and every man plunged back through some doorway. They crowded into darkness, into ill-smelling hovels where cats skulked and chickens fluttered and squawked; but as the Federal gunners paused to reload their machine guns Sergeant Bogan stepped vigilantly out. A scattering fire from the scene of disaster showed that more than one of Numero Tres' men had escaped, and the belch of flame from the roof of El Club indicated the presence of a large force of Federals. But it was a Mexican battle, with both sides under cover and shooting for general results, and Beanie grunted contemptuously. "Come on, boys," he said, "here's our chance to slip up on 'em. Let's go in and give 'em hell!"

He started off down the *callejon*, keeping scrupulously within the shadow, and so intent were the Federals upon annihilating Numero Tres that they failed to notice his approach. Travel-

ing by twos and threes, and dodging from doorway to doorway, the Legion crept closer and closer to its goal, but as they crossed the last street some Federal saw them running and smashed a bullet into the wall. The next group of men were greeted with a volley which filled the street with flying lead, and then the machine guns took it up. For half an hour, while the Americans lay hid in houses, the gunners raked the *callejon* with shot, and then the firing stopped. The old silence came back, that tense, watchful silence that falls when gunners wait for their prey, and once more Bogan ventured to look out.

With ten picked men, he had led the advance, making each rush singly so that no storm of bullets could wipe them out by surprise, and now, in the lee of a protecting wall, they held a council of war.

"We're too close, boys," said Beanie, after they had all expressed their views. "They can shoot right down on these roofs. We've got to get back where we can wing them gunners, and then we can rush the joint. But at the same time," he added, as Sullivan began to murmur, "if they's any of you want to stay here, I've a little special work to be done."

"I'll go you!" barked Sullivan, leaping forward to claim the duty, and Bogan gave him a box of matches.

"All right," he said. "See how close you can slip up and touch a match to some old wooden shack."

"I'll burn the whole block!" returned Sullivan recklessly. "You beat it and watch my smoke!"

"Burn 'em one at a time, then!" called Bogan after him. "And don't get killed, you danged fool! And now back to the dobes, boys! We'll show 'em some night fighting that'll make 'em sorry they spoke."

He shot like a flash across the narrow street, and the bullets slashed the ground behind him. Then, as the firing died away, Whittle darted over after him, and the bullets spattered again. It was a game now, with him as with the rest of them—a game of

life and death, but so surcharged with excitement that all fear and anxiety vanished. The greatest game in the world, for which all boys prepare from the moment they can dangle a sword—the game of kill or be killed. He realized now that all the rough sports he had enjoyed—the football, the boxing, the lacrosse—were miniatures of war, of that ultimate and greatest of conflicts, when men bandy bullets instead of blows. The Federals were shooting, and watching the street corners, as hunters watch a gap for deer; but soon, if Jimmy Sullivan made good his promise, there would be bullets going back.

Whittle ran down the street to catch up with Beanie, his leader in this sport of sports, and a great thankfulness came over him that he had been spared by death to be in at such a glorious finish. At the taking of a city—or another Alamo, where every man would go down fighting. On the roof of a house he lay down beside Beanie, who was building a hasty barricade, and watched him with a soldier's pride. Bogan was a master of his craft, an expert rifleman as well as a leader of men, and as he tore loose adobes and laid them along the housetop, Whittle carefully did the same. Then he lay flat behind them, his rifle thrust between, and waited for the fireworks to begin.

A glare of flames almost at the base of El Club rose up like a red tongue in the night, and the Americans greeted it with a cheer; then, as the rising conflagration revealed the Federals behind their sandbags, a careful sniping began. The blaze rose up higher, turning the night into day and pointing out every brick on the building, and as their gunners went down before the sure fire of the Americans the Federals abandoned their posts. Shrill yells and vivas came from the Cinco de Mayo, where Numero Tres and his insurrectos had taken shelter, and then fire after fire rose up about them as they took up the work of destruction. But here once more they defeated their own purpose, for where Bogan's fire left his

men in shadow and lit up the citadel of the Federals, Numero Tres simply blinded his own fighting men and revealed their presence to the enemy.

Not two hundred yards away, on the summit of the hill, stood the massive stone cathedral, and as the swarming insurrectos, who had been joined by deserters from both the Federal and Montaña's camp, assembled in a side street for a charge, the machine guns on the cathedral suddenly raked them from the side and threw them into confusion. They scattered like quail, and, as fleeing men crossed the Cinco de Mayo, the gunners of the club, throwing caution to the winds, sprang up to mow them down. But their triumph was short-lived, and man after man went down before the Federals awoke to the source of the bullets and abandoned their guns in a panic.

The roof of El Club was strewn with dead and wounded, shot down by the invisible Legion, and while the Federals on the cathedral were still cheering their victory every gun on the club fell silent. The ramparts were left vacant, the last head disappeared, and Bogan let out a yell. Five minutes later, with his men behind him, he went creeping up the street, and before the Federals on the roof were aware of their presence Helge Wahlgren came hurtling at the door. It burst in before him, and the next instant the Legion was there and pouring in. From one room to the other, up stairways, down cellars, they rushed with their guns ready to strike, and after one look, when they burst out upon the roof, the Federals laid down their arms.

It was theirs in a minute, without the loss of a man—the club, with its elegant private suites, its wine cellars, and its ponderous safe. There was shelter there, and treasure and guns and ammunition, a fortress and a palace in one. From the sandbagged roof there was a stuttering tattoo as Jimmy Sullivan and a band of irrepressibles turned the machine guns upon the church, but within the club all was shouting and confusion as the soldiers rampaged about. In the main gaming hall, with

its wheels and tables and glittering mirrors and bar, some ransacked desks and drawers, some rioted among the wet goods, and others battered and smashed at the safe. At last their dream, the dream of all soldiers, had become a glorious reality, and they joined in a mad scramble for loot.

On the roof of El Club, Beanie Bogan, the conqueror, stood gazing at the work of his hands—the buildings still burning, the dead and the wounded and the cowering Federal prisoners in the corner.

"Turn 'em loose!" he said to the guard. "*Bueno! Vamos, muchachos!*" And he beckoned the Federals to go.

"No, no!" they cried, tearing off their caps and coats and the hated insignia of Reyes. "We will join the insurrectos—the valiant Army of Liberation!"

"*Muy bien*, but go!" answered Bogan impatiently. "The valiant army is camped up the river."

He hustled them outside, more dazed than ever, and entered the main gambling hall. All the lights were burning brightly, a volunteer barkeeper was nimbly mixing drinks at the bar, and the Legion was there to a man.

"Hey!" he shouted, rolling his eyes on them roguishly. "You're a sweet bunch of soldiers! Do you expect me to stand guard all alone? Four men to the roof and two at each door! Come on, now; who's got the most stuff? Well, up you go, then, or I'll drumhead ye for looting! And now, barkeep, I'll have that drink!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

DIPLOMACY AND DYNAMITE.

According to the Articles of War and the Hague Convention, pillage and looting are expressly forbidden, but in the bright, brief lexicon of the soldier of fortune there is no dearer word than "loot." It is the reward of the conqueror, handed down from a time when war was something more than straight murder. If Sergeant Bogan had tried to restrain his wild followers in their first mad revel at the club, he would

have been as impotent as Canute on the shore of the sea when he ordered the waves to turn back. Gambolier might have attempted it, but Bogan was a top sergeant, and he knew his men too well. The time had come, after days of hardship, when they had found the opportunity to relax, and the best thing to do, and the pleasantest to boot, was to throw in with the boys and enjoy it.

Outside the club the fires burned low, the city fell back to fitful calm, but within all was shouting and drinking and excitement and trying the games of chance. Upon the hill above them some six hundred Federals looked down from their stone forts in awe, from across the river and from Montaña's camp thousands of people stared across in wonder; but the gallant Legion, putting all fears behind them, ramped and rioted like the barbarians they were. The great club safe was laid on its back with a thud that shook the town, and while others came and went Helge Wahlgren and Big Bill played an anvil chorus on its door. The instrument was a sledge hammer brought in by some bold scout, and both Helge and Big Bill were giants of strength, but Beanie Bogan refused to take any interest in their puerile attempts at safe-cracking. There was only one way, as he knew very well, of springing that ponderous door, and that was with a charge of dynamite.

The revelry was at its height when the telephone by the bar set up a persistent ringing, and at last Beanie Bogan, with a braggartly flourish, took the receiver off the hook.

"Hello!" he bellowed. "Yes, good marnin' to ye! Sure, this is Sergeant Bogan himself. Have we took the town? Well, all we want of it; we're resting and recuperating at the club. What's that ye want? A story for your paper? Ah, come on over and get it!"

He rang off abruptly, and for some time to come paid no more attention to the bell, until once more he did a two-step, and, taking down the receiver, replied in the shrill voice of a girl.

"What's that you say?" he mimicked,

while his men gave way to roars of laughter. "Oh, hello, Pepe; how's the boy this evening? This is certainly an un-expected pleasure. Yes, Sergeant Bogan speaking. What can I do for you, general? And by the way, when are you going to have me executed?"

He crossed his legs, and stood there grinning while he listened to the voice on the phone, and a silence came over the room. Pepe Montaña was talking to Bogan over the special wire from the camp, but as he continued his remarks the smile on Beanie's lips gave way to a saturnine snarl.

"Oh, you're going to take the town, are ye?" he shouted at last. "Well, we've took half of it ourselves already. Yes, the same bunch of bums that you kicked out of camp and ordered to have shot at sunrise. Oh, *we* don't give a dang—go as far as you like—but let me tell you one thing, Mr. Montaña. Don't make the mistake of coming between us and the river. No, *we don't*—we don't recognize nothing—and we don't take orders from nobody. If you want to take the town, take it from the east, south or west, but don't you cut off our retreat—not after what Gambolier said. And another thing, Pepe, if I get my gun on Espinosa, I'll bore him sure as hell. That's all now—no hard feelings—we'll be right here at the club. Go to it, old boy! Ta, ta!"

He hung up the phone, and as he turned to his men his mouth was twisted hard.

"Well, cut it out now!" he snapped. "This has gone far enough; Pepe has ordered a general attack. Every man to the roof except Bill and eight more—and, Whittle, you take charge of the bar. Barricade them doors, Bill, and put sandbags in the windows, and don't let no Mexicans in. We'll let 'em fight this out among themselves."

"And then we'll crack that safe!" suggested Big Bill hopefully.

"No, we won't!" answered Bogan. "The first dynamite we get will go toward cracking that cathedral."

He mounted to the roof, and for an hour they lay waiting and listening for

the first gun of the attack; then, as all remained quiet, one head after another dropped down, and the wearied Legion slept. In the great hall below, where Big Bill watched the door and Whittle guarded the bar, sleep crept in and conquered them also, until at last they woke up startled and found that the day had dawned. But something had awakened them, and as they stumbled to the windows they heard the thunder of cannon.

"It's Long Tom!" cried McCafferty, and as a cheer came from the roof he turned and ran up the stairs. Whittle followed on the jump, only to find Beanie Bogan beating down inquisitive heads with his gun barrel.

"Never mind now!" he said. "Take my word and the rest of 'em—the big tank is bored through and through. And I know who did it; it was little Tommy Cruse, that deserted us. Sure he's had his gun aimed for more than a week at that big black tank on the hill, and the municipal water supply is gone, the first shot. Next he'll bust the cuartel, where Bracamonte is, or maybe it'll be the church."

They lay quiet and listened, gazing out between the sandbags at the cathedral and the houses about. The cuartel and jail were over the hill, concealed by the buildings between. At the foot of the slope lay the tree-grown park, where the band played in happier times, but its peace was unruffled by shot or shell; Long Tom had fired its last shot. When, later in the day, Tommy Cruse crept in and joined them he was cursing and laughing at once—cursing Gambolier, who had insisted upon a screw breechblock, and laughing at his one perfect shot. The next time it was fired the breechblock blew out, and the insurrecto "artillery" was scrapped.

But the firing of Long Tom was more than an incident; it was the signal for a general assault, and as the Legion peered and listened they heard a faint yell and then the distant firing of guns. It was off to the south, and a minute afterward there was a wild fusillade down the river. Then the bullets began to sing as the excited

mountain Mexicans opened up from the trenches on the plain. In the early-morning darkness they had surrounded the city, and already they were inside the town. But along the river—on that forbidden ground which the Legion had claimed as its own—there were only a few stray shots from the insurgents, who had retreated to the bridge.

When the sun rose on the scene the Federals were retiring, and the insurgents were marching into the town, but just as their victory seemed almost assured there was a roar from the field gun on the cathedral, and a tongue of white smoke belched out. The gun was concealed from the view of the Legion by the façade which rose above the flat roof, but the explosion of the shell could be plainly seen as it burst above the distant insurgents. The gun roared out again, and at the third or fourth shell the Army of Liberation broke and ran. With his usual masterly strategy, Montaña or Gambolier had delayed the attack till dawn, and now for the third time the wild mountaineers were stampeded by the crash of bursting shrapnel. To the south and to the west the guns hurled their shells; and by the time the Legion had finished its breakfast the rebels were driven from the town.

"The dog-goned fools!" cursed Bogan bitterly as he watched the last high hats fade from sight. "They wait around all night, when they might have took the town, and charge against artillery at dawn. And now, by grab, these Federals will get cocky and shoot the holy liver out of us."

But the Federals were Mexicans, and breakfast was ready, so the Legion was left in peace. They were in a perilous position, practically cut off from all retreat and almost under the guns of the cuartel, but already it had been shown that the Federals were deserting and had no heart for the conflict. The highly trained gunners, commanded by officers who had learned their profession in Europe, were Bracamonte's chief reliance and support, and for the moment at least he seemed very well satisfied to leave the Legion

alone. For not only had they routed the pick of his soldiers and fought their way up to his stronghold, but they had broken up as well certain negotiations with Montaña looking toward the peaceful surrender of the town.

It was easy to understand the chagrin and blind envy which had prompted the insurrecto attack. In a moment of bravado Beanie Bogan had boasted that he had taken half the town, and to the startled Montaña, watching the glare of burning buildings, it had seemed true beyond a doubt. But what would happen to his position as a leader if the impossible should actually take place—if those turbulent Americans should storm the plaza unaided and demand the surrender of the town? Montaña knew Bogan and the desperate hardihood of his men, and he had ordered a general attack; then, since the telephone was still in commission, he had called up the Federal colonel, Bracamonte. In his stiffest manner he gave him until daylight to raise the white flag above the cuartel, and then, ringing off, he sent out his army with orders to attack at dawn. No white flag had appeared, Long Tom had given the signal—but the result had made Montaña tear his hair.

Yet something must be done; the Army of Liberation must not allow itself to suffer such disgrace! Should it be whispered through Mexico that forty Americans had triumphed while they had thrice fled? Should the word go to Reyes that while he, Montaña, bluffed and paltered these riffraff had taken the town? Once more the phone rang, and when Bogan went to answer it a chastened voice came to his ear.

"Why, hello, *mi general!*" cried Beanie, with mock cordiality. "Say, that sure was a fine piece of work! Oh, nah, nah; I don't mean your attack! My Lord, that was rotten! But say, didn't you hear that Long Tom hit the tank? A dead center, believe me! And the water run out till it took all the pressure off our pipes. Yes, we're stopping at the club—swell quarters, you bet—but what have you got on your chest?"

It is difficult, of course, for a Spanish gentleman to reply to a question like that, but Pepe Montaña knew Bogan too well to beat about the bush.

"Sergeant Bogan," he began, "your heroic assault made my men both jealous and proud—jealous that Americans should be the first to storm the city, but proud that you are a part of our army. The time was not ripe to begin our attack, but when they saw the flames rising up against the sky they clamored for an instant assault. They pictured the Foreign Legion fighting desperately against great odds and unsupported by their comrades at arms, and so, to be brief, I ordered the attack which resulted, as you saw, in defeat."

"Of course it did," broke in Beanie impatiently. "Did Gambolier lay out that attack? Well—*fire him!* And I'll tell you something, Pepe—you ought to know it by this time—they big hats can't go up against artillery. Ah, nix on the alibis! Ain't the Foreign Legion here, right up within pistol shot of the plaza? Well, get rid of Gambolier, and forget all that strategy and come in and take the town! I can tell you how to do it, and, if you don't believe me, I'll hop in and *show* you, by grab!"

"I believe you, Sergeant Bogan," answered Montaña, laughing jovially.

"You have certainly shown us already. And that brings me to what I had to say. I have arranged a little truce with Colonel Bracamonte while we care for our wounded and dead, and he has agreed, in recognition of your valor, to let you march out with all the honors of war."

"What d'y'e mean," demanded Bogan, "'with all the honors of war?' D'y'e think for a minute we're going to quit when we're right up next to the plaza? Well, guess again, and you'll probably be right; but, say, this is my busiest time of day."

"Oh, no, no!" protested Montaña. "Don't ring off yet. I want to explain my position. Now any little thing I can do for you, sergeant, don't hesitate to let me know. But as matters stand now I shall be unable to assist you, and so you must come out immediately."

"All right, *mi general*," answered Beanie grimly. "I'll put that order on file."

"On file!" repeated Montaña. "Perhaps I don't understand you. But if ten thousand dollars would be any inducement——"

"It wouldn't," answered Beanie. "What I need is some dynamite. You diplomats make me tired."

TO BE CONTINUED.



PADEREWSKI HAS HIS LIMITATIONS

ON one occasion last winter, when Paderewski was giving a concert in Philadelphia, there were in the audience eight or ten people who, for some unknown reason, kept going in and out of the theater, opening the doors and creating more or less annoyance. For a while the genius at the piano kept on doing marvelous things to the treble and knocking the stuffing out of the bass. Apparently oblivious to the annoyance, he was as animated as an aspen leaf in a whirlwind.

At last he could stand it no longer, and, with a final shake of his head which narrowly escaped breaking his backbone, he leaped from the piano stool and volplaned behind the scenes.

The music lovers applauded this sign of his disapproval of the opening and shutting of the doors. In a few minutes he returned to the stage, came down to the footlights, and delivered this brief speech:

"If I am to play, the doors must be closed and kept closed. I realize and I admit my manifest inferiority. I am not an open-air pianist."

Fear

By William Inglis

Author of "As Number Seven Saw It," "Kate, the Giant Killer," Etc.

Never yet was human power that could evade the patient search,
the vigil long
Of him that treasures up a wrong.

IF you had chanced to be on the State road, between Shaw's Springs and Empire, on a golden morning not so very long ago, you would have seen Jim Cadogan passing by. And if you happened to be a judge of a proper man, you would have stood to watch him as he passed. His head rose high and proud as the head of a stag, his deep chest swelled and fell easily, his long arms swung in perfect rhythm; not a sign of exertion anywhere. Yet his forehead was plowed deep with long furrows, and his heavy, black brows were drawn low in a snarl. His eyes saw nothing on the way, for as he surged ahead with the grace of a splendid engine his thoughts were all turned within, engaged with a sore problem.

Could he beat the Red Man? This was the question that had walked beside him for years, eaten with him, slept with him, left a black taste in his mouth. Could his dazzling attack and marvelous speed avoid the crafty, side-long approach, the sudden right fist of the shambling, freckled monster who had long dogged him with the endless patience of a slut-hound? The boys at the training camp laughed at the Red Man, made song of him, bet their dollars in a hat pool on which round Jim would put him out in—and not one number in the hat ran above ten. But Jim didn't laugh or sing, or pick a number out of a hat. He sneered. A little

sneering goes a long way in making your friends think you despise your enemy, but no man ever fooled himself with a sneer. Jim certainly didn't. He worried over the question as it came up in his mind in a dozen new forms every day. He could not hide from it.

That was why Jim had sprinted away this morning from his running partner on the road to Empire, leaving the man to digest the dust and the hearty curse he had bestowed upon him as he ran off in a long lead. Jim wanted to think. He winced at the weight of the title he bore. To be champion of the world is the farthest thing imaginable from a sinecure. The champion wears a belt of gold, but it is lined with black care that corrodes the heart of a man. It was not that Jim would mind a mere physical beating. Even a knock-out does not hurt as much as having a tooth drawn. The horror that haunted him was this —

Let him make one mistake in the ring, and away would fly his title, his fame, his whole future. All the king's horses and all the king's men can do nothing for him. He is finished. The best he can hope for is the verdict, "He was a good one in his day," a loathsome epitaph to carve upon a living man—to wear perhaps for fifty years.

When he came to the rusty blacksmith shop that marked the edge of Empire, Cadogan slowed to a walk. He

hated to be admired and gaped at by little groups of men. Cheering crowds he could stand, but worshipping individuals annoyed him. So he pulled the thick collar of his white sweater high around his jaws and hid all he could of his famous face. The sparring partner, an inch taller and thirty pounds bigger than he, now jogged up beside him, panting, and swung a dripping cap. Besides formidable bulk he showed the massive features and the buttressed chin of the gladiator, and half a dozen slovenly and collarless men about town at the door of the Honest Man pool, bar, and faro room hailed him genially. The real champion, with his hawk beak and the keen, questioning, dominating eyes, they ignored.

The two athletes swung around the corner at the post office, made a circuit to the main road, and began to trot homeward. The champion could no more keep back with his plodding companion than a stake horse can linger beside a selling plater. Also it was possible that the huge man had his orders; for it is the unwritten law of the training camp that the champion excels at everything he touches. If he condescends to such small game as quoits or pool, or even tiddledywinks, he must always win. This is part of the unconscious psychology of training—confirming, strengthening the great man's Will to Win.

A quarter of a mile from home, Jim ceased running, and began to prance to and fro, striking incredibly swift blows at an imaginary enemy—"shadow fighting," as it is called—in order to let his companion run far ahead. Then Jim yelled, "Go!" and, as the big fellow kicked up the dust in a mighty sprint, flew after him, caught him, and passed him in a terrific burst of speed at the finish. He still breathed at ease.

After Cadogan had enjoyed a brief shower and a long, vigorous rubdown by four puffing experts, he came presently away from the training house toward his dwelling, dressed as if he were going to stroll down Fifth Avenue. On the porch he met his manager, a short, slight man with quick blue eyes.

"Go all the way to Empire?" the manager inquired casually.

"Yes," answered Cadogan.

"Then you're ready right now," exclaimed the manager. "It's eight miles over there and back. You did it in a shade over fifty minutes, and finished like a quarter-miler. Never puffed. I tell you, Jim, you've got this fight on ice. It's in; that's what it is; it's in."

"Listen, Bill!" the champion returned, throwing his arm across his manager's shoulders and leading him off to a corner where no one could overhear. "Listen, Bill! I feel sure I've got this red-headed gorilla, or I'd never have made the match. But he's a dangerous fellow, Bill. What I'm studying most is not to get gay with him after I've sent him staggering. You and I saw him drop Meagher and Sharlock and Roonan dead to the world when they had him groggy and were laughing and nodding to their friends around the ring. I'm not going to take a single chance with him. You know if anything happens to me it's all off with Madge. She'd never look at a loser."

"No, and she won't have to," laughed Bill Bradley, as if he hadn't a care in the world. "By the way, we open in Chicago on the twenty-first. Old Fursmann guarantees us twelve thousand for two weeks at the Strand. Pretty soft, eh?"

"We're good for two hundred thousand in the next year!" exclaimed Cadogan. "That is, if——" He laughed; but to Bill Bradley's sensitive ear the laugh sounded a little forced. Not one word of doubt had he ever spoken to his champion, but he had suspected that Jim was eating his heart out with worry. Shrewd wits, great courage, and endless resourcefulness had carried Bradley in ten years from the petty business of "news butcher" on overland trains to a high standing among managers of amusements. He knew that while Cadogan was lately gaining fame as a fairish actor, he had not fought a man in two years. His burning ambition was to play *Cashel Byron* so well that Shaw must cross the ocean to see

him. While he was studying the art of the stage with every atom of his energy, the Red Man had been fighting his way to the top so steadfastly that his last challenge simply could not be ignored.

"Blast the women!" Bradley grumbled to his chief trainer, Charley Black, as they lounged in the sunshine after the midday meal. "You know what's taking the weight off him? Afraid Miss Moreton will quit him if he loses. Can you beat that for being wrong? You know she's as crazy about him as he is over her."

"Maybe," Charley Black replied. "But she's just as ambitious as Jim. She's thrown over the best part she ever played so as to be near us when this thing comes off. She has her heart set on making the hit of her life in this Shaw play with Jim. There's nothing to it but Jim. Still, if——"

"I've got it!" Bradley exploded, after a long pause in which he worried a chunk off his cigar. "No use leaving anything to chance. I'll fix that little thing. And, say, Charley, give the scales one more little twist, will you? Got to keep Jim thinking he's husky and heavy till we've got the load off his mind."

Bradley at once wrote a letter to Miss Moreton, and motored twenty miles to the main line to hand it to the express messenger. "And the fiver," he remarked as a bill changed hands, "is to make sure that you hand the letter to her—yourself, understand!"

When the mail from the coast came in next afternoon Bradley picked out one envelope whose clear, firm handwriting he knew, and put it on top of the pile the secretary carried to the champion.

"There goes what will put ten pounds on Jim's back and an extra hundred into his punch," the manager observed to Charley Black as they smoked on the porch. Yet somehow Cadogan's behavior didn't seem to corroborate what Bradley said. He started down the road alone, hands deep in his pockets and hat pulled low over his eyes. Laddie followed him, and in a few moments

the poor collie came back whimpering from the first curse he had ever taken from his master.

The training bouts in the handball court that afternoon were battles. In spite of the thick pneumatic mask he wore to protect his head and neck, the Pride of Colorado was knocked cold in the first round with a vicious right hook to the jaw. He couldn't chew anything thicker than gruel for the next four days. Cadogan took on big Bob and huge Jeff next, each resting three minutes while the other boxed. The champion kept up a running fire of jokes as he worked with them, but his bristling brows were tied in angry black knots, and his cold hazel eyes gleamed like the points in an arc light. He had both big men staggering with his fierce jolts, though Bradley cut the rounds short again and again.

"I wish it was to-morrow instead of the seventeenth," said the manager, smiling, as he persuaded his hot champion to stop ten minutes sooner than usual.

"I wish I had the red gorilla here now," growled Cadogan. "Look at this!"

Tearing the eight-ounce pillows off as he ran, and not throwing so much as a towel over his mighty shoulders, all wet and glistening from his fast work, the champion disappeared into his dressing room and hurried out with a letter.

"Look!" he commanded, as he dragged Bradley down to the end of the long, cold handball court. "No, I'll read it to you. Remember I told you she'd quit me if I lose? Well, she's ready for it—letting me down easy. Listen to this:

" . . . And no matter how the contest ends, Jim, you are *my* hero forever."

"Good girl!" said Bradley. "There's loyalty for you—real thing."

"My Lord, Bill, are you blind?" cried Cadogan. "Don't you see she's getting ready to run out? She never wrote anything like that before."

"Pfff! You're the blind one," Bradley retorted. "Don't stand here

catching cold and talking rot. Get in there for your shower and rub. And let me tell you one thing—if you beat all your sparring partners to death, you'll go into the ring short of work. There isn't another to be had for love or money. Get in now!"

Before Cadogan had splashed his first splash Bradley was in his car, speeding to town, and before Cadogan was half dressed a telegram was flying to Frisco begging Miss Moreton to hurry to the battle ground if she would save her man. And there's the reason why she arrived at Boone City next day and became the guest of Mrs. Judge Davis, and why the headlines in newspapers in every part of the country told the world that "Fighter's Fiancée Comes to Cheer Him On," and compared America's most charming comedienne with the heroines who looked down upon the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

The manager took Cadogan out for a little run in his car early that afternoon. Halfway to Boone City, he remarked that they might stop a few moments to call on the Davises. The happy angle at which his cigar was tilted, or perhaps the joyous gleam in his shrewd blue eyes, revealed a great deal to Cadogan. Trust a champion to have intuition!

"What!" he shouted. "She's there? Honest, Bill, isn't she a wonder?" He instinctively half arose, as if he intended to jump out of the car and run. "Throw into the high, Bill!" he urged. "See if you can't get some speed out of your old boat."

Five minutes later—Jim would have called it five years—the car was stopped before the Davises' door, the tall champion had bounded out, up and across the porch, pressed an electric button, upset Wing Li Sam as he opened the door, and gathered into his arms a fair little girl whose eyes were dancing as she came to meet him.

"It's too good!" Jim cried. "It isn't true! I can't believe it!"

"Don't be silly, Big Bear," laughed a sweet voice somewhat muffled by the folds of a thick cravat. Then a small

hand as delicately fair and flushed as a Killarney rose pushed the strong youth back. "Do you suppose," asked the voice, "that I could rest miles away with you working so hard here?" A pair of blue eyes were gazing up into the eyes of Cadogan. If ever love and loyalty glowed in a look—

"And I shall be there to see you win," Madge went on. "Oh, I know all you're going to say about that rough crowd. Yes, and old Probasco will rave, too. Let's see him get a new star. I'm going."

"I guess I'm a poor manager, eh?" Bill Bradley inwardly chuckled on the way back to camp with his gay champion.

Jim was bubbling. "I'll have to wear him out with body blows, Bill," he said, not unkindly, when he grew calm enough to talk plainly. "She wouldn't like to see him cut up, you know. He can't lay a glove on me. I'll make it look like a Y. M. C. A. pink tea."

"You said it!" Bradley agreed. "Nothing rough. Under the heart till he wabbles. Then—right to the chin—curtains for Mister Red Man!"

The seventeenth was the most beautiful day the game ever knew. The glorious sun was at the zenith, flooding the blue arch of heaven with burning gold. Near the western horizon a few tiny wisps of cottony cloud only emphasized the clearness of the sky. Low hills covered with black-green sagebrush, backed by a distant wall of snow-ridged mountains, formed the frame of a strange picture. In the midst of an enormous, new, wooden amphitheater that gave forth whiffs of resin in the ardent sun stood a platform about as high as a man's chin and twenty-four feet square. To the eyes of Madge Moreton as she took her first look at the site of a glove battle that platform bore a grotesque resemblance to a match box sitting in the midst of a big, shallow muffin bowl. A few yards away stood a tower of latticework, on the top of which two moving-picture men were training their cameras, swinging them this way and

that, so as to make sure they covered every part of the platform.

Through long aisles leading from every side streams of men were pouring into the big bowl, directed by two hundred red-capped ushers to their seats that stretched in long ridges around the high sides or into the boxes fenced with stout scantling that clustered close to the platform. Here were men from all the world come to see the supreme form of physical contest—Australian sheep kings, coffee monarchs from Rio, South African diamond princes, gold millionaires from the Rand; silent, shy new finders of fortune lured hither from the burning sands of the Mohave Desert, making their way among British noblemen and big-game hunters, American captains of industry, judges, lawmakers, soldiers, aldermen, mere millionaires and fellows of all the arts, trades, professions, and businesses in this vast country. Kings and able men of the underworld were scattered among them, too, perhaps in the same degree as one might find them along Broadway or the Strand, where, however, they would not attract half so much attention.

Jim Cadogan yawned and stretched on a broad couch in his dressing room. It was a good two hours before noon, the time appointed for the battle to begin. Bill Bradley knew how he hated the back slappings and good wishes of men who had never seen him before, but were simply carried out of themselves by hero worship; so he brought him to the ringside long before the earliest spectators came in. He wanted Jim to rest before the event, so he led away the group of seconds and rubbers, posted a faithful sentinel at the door to make sure no one could disturb him, and left him to drowse.

No, not to drowse. The same obsession that had dogged the champion through all the period of training came back, now, more insistent than ever. Could he beat the Red Man? Of course he could beat him! Yes, but suppose—just suppose, you know—the awkward freak should land that crunching right of his? To be sure,

he could never do it in the world—what, that clumsy gorilla land on the cleverest man that ever climbed into the ring? But yet, if he should—

Fame, fortune, friends, even Madge herself, swept away by one stroke of that freckled fist! Nonsense! He would not think of such a monstrous gibe of fate. He would put it out of his mind and take a good sleep, a fine, refreshing sleep like the one he enjoyed beside the arena under the stars that great night when he beat the Big Fellow and took from him the championship of the world. But the drowsier he tried to be the less he could sleep.

One by one the events of his great night marched through his memory. Once more he saw the crowd, the red clay floor of the ring, the menacing shape of the man he was so soon to topple from his throne. He glowed as the battle fought itself again in his fond memory, as he saw once more that huge, battered bulk totter and fall under his pitiless drives. He even remembered the tiny gout of red that marred his own unbruised skin when he hugged a friend outside the barbed-wire wall that fenced the ring and roared in his ear to be heard above the roar of the mob: "Didn't I tell you it'd be easy?" Yes, and he remembered with painful accuracy a little incident that happened afterward, a thing he had laughed off at the time, but which came back now to torment him.

He heard again the queer, piping voice of the Red Man outside his dressing-room door saying: "Let me in, do, like a good fellow. 'H've a telegram for 'im and H'i want to wish 'im luck." He heard the man on the door growl a refusal, and then the scramble of feet against the door as the Red Man leaped, caught the open transom, and pulled himself up until his gleaming eyes and hearty grin showed above the locked door. Then, recurred his own voice, rasping: "Throw that monkey out!" The command was obeyed, but not until he heard the Red Man snarl: "H'll get you for this, if it takes the rest o' my life!"

How he and his satellites had laughed—

as the clumsy red lout shambled away. The idea of a mere middleweight nobody threatening him, the marvel of the age! But the lout was no longer a nobody. The middleweight champion had fallen before him like ripe grass to the scythe; he had grown many pounds heavier, and now he was at hand to avenge the insult. What was that fool verse Jim had learned at school—something about never yet was human power that could evade the patient search, the vigil long, of him that treasures up a wrong? All foolishness! Blast the foolishness! Jim would go to sleep. But somehow he could not win one moment of drowse, even of decent rest. The pathetic face of the humiliated Red Man haunted him. The snarl of rage, too. For the first time in his young life Jim Cadogan thought how wasteful it is to go out of one's way to make enemies. He was glad when Bill and Charley and all the retinue came in and he could begin the shadow boxing and rubdown which every fighting man goes through to warm his heart and the rest of his muscles before he climbs into the ring.

At last! A scout ran to the door, calling: "They're in the ring!" Jim arose, wrapped his gay bath robe around him, and strode out at the head of his party. He had heard the scattering shouts that greeted the challenger, and smiled with haughty patronage; let the lout wait a moment and he'd hear real applause. Ah, here it was—the yell of delight that exploded the moment he showed on the floor and soon swelled up from every part of the amphitheater. Jim bowed right and left affably to his frantic worshipers. They bellowed as lustily as their remote ancestors hailing the first king, first ableman, master by right of the fist.

When he came to the steps he ran nimbly up and vaulted over the top rope into the square "ring," an exhibition of agility and high spirits carefully calculated to impress and oppress the enemy, and again he bowed to the wild cheering. His eye met the eager gaze of Madge. He smiled at her; then resolved to put her out of his mind

while he should attend to the unpleasant business of the day. Near his corner he saw a noted train robber, a tall, blond man with the deadly, gleamless, dull-blue eye of the professional "killer," and knew that he and six gunmen of his clan were there to kill for him in case of need—such as a disputed claim of foul, for example. Facing them across the platform were six other dead shots, led by a town marshal of the days when county-seat wars were common, and who had eighteen notches on the butt of his gun in memory of bad men he had eliminated. That squad was to act for the Red Man if his rights were invaded.

Jim knew that a "gun play," as it was affectionately called in this State, was accounted the natural and proper protest of any gentleman who felt affronted. The authorities would not care a whoop if there were a dozen killings at the ringside. He determined that he would be punctilious in obeying all the rules laid down by the Marquis of Queensbury. He was fighting in a powder magazine. He saw the enemy come out of his corner and shuffle toward the center of the roped inclosure. He, too, sauntered in that direction, staring at the challenger's awkward, in-bent knees, and very openly snickering at their ugliness. He threw out his hand in greeting as he might have tossed a dollar to a beggar, but the Red Man drew back his right.

"Not now, Cadogan," he said coldly, his icy blue eyes meanwhile piercing the champion to the core. "You refused my 'and last week when we met on the road. Hi'll shake yours after Hi've bloomin' well knocked you out."

"Afraid I'll twist his hand off," Jim laughed to his friends in the press seats as he turned lightly away; but he was aware of a chill that shook him—ever so little, but shook him. He had just seen in the Red Man's eyes the same vengeful look they burned on him that night before the men dragged him down from the transom. And for the first time Jim acknowledged to himself that the feeling which possessed him now

was the same that possessed him then—a real fear of the uncouth Red Man.

Physical fear? Not one shred of it. He had the courage that marches gayly up to the cannon's mouth. What he felt was the fear that this Caliban might by some mischance drive home one blow that would end his reign as champion, destroy his success, kill the goose that laid his golden eggs.

Above the whirring of the moving-picture machines and the St. Vitus chatter of half a hundred telegraph instruments at that instant crying to the ends of the earth that the Red Man had insultingly refused to touch the champion's hand, a great gong clanged sullenly. Swift as a stag at morn, Jim sprang from his corner and clear past the mid-ring, seemingly by a mere effort of the will. Head up, and chin in, his clean-cut limbs swaying in swift and graceful play, he was at once seeking an opening for a blow and watchful of the first hint of danger which would send him flying backward in a long leap. The Red Man moved forth stiffly on his twisty, scraggy legs; his burly arms, splotted with freckles that looked like reddish-brown mushrooms, were swinging free and loose—capable of instantly shooting forth a fist with all the power of a bolt from a catapult, or of tangling the arms of the enemy in python coils. His air was that of one who patiently waits.

Ah-h-h! A gasp of admiration breathed all unconsciously by ten thousand throats made a chorus as of a tossing pine forest. For men saw Cadogan's playful left fist suddenly fly as a bullet, hit the Red Man flush on the mouth, and drive his head back with a snap. He waved his hand as if in clumsy salute. Again the champion's left darted home, and yet again, always driving back that red poll. The challenger tried to retaliate. He might as well have tried to hit a distant mirror that flashed its blinding beam upon him.

The crowd, like a prodigious hive, was buzzing its approval. Its man was winning, seemingly with ease. It was a happy crowd, except perhaps a few nobodies here and there who had pinned

their faith and put their money on the Red Man. And who cared what they felt or thought, anyhow?

The clang of the gong for the second round could hardly be heard above the joyous approval. The champion was after his victim again on the instant. His left fist shot forth in straight lunges and in swift hooks to chin or ribs that jarred the plodding Red Man, but never sent him back. No matter how often he was hit by the fists that were ceaselessly exploding upon him like shrapnel, he continued to stride awkwardly forward, always trying to send home a punch, and always failing by a broad margin. Now and then he shook his red head, as if to signify that he couldn't understand why he was missing, but would work out the puzzle somehow.

Jim began to work his right, driving it home to the ribs as a follower of the stabbing left that peppered the enemy on jaw or nose or mouth. He smiled patronizingly at his victim, as if he really would like to stop and explain things to him if only he had time. "Pretty good, eh?" he would ask politely after a hot shot got home, and the Red Man never failed stolidly to answer: "Aye!"

In the third Jim began serious business. Each time the right went in now he drove all his force behind it, and often as the fist thudded against the floating ribs its impact lifted the challenger up on tiptoe. These were dangerous blows, bending in the short lower ribs, shocking the nerves in the digestive tract, and weakening the man fast. But years of simple living had gifted him with marvelous powers of recuperation, and after one minute's rest at the end of a round he came out again refreshed and still pressing on after his brilliant foe.

Then came a notable change. When the gong had clanged the end of the fifth round the Red Man's legs bent as he sought his corner. There could be no mistaking the evidence of his haggard face and swollen and bruised torso. "Finish him in the next," Bradley whispered to Cadogan. "The backs

of his thighs are quivering. He's all in."

The champion sprang to the task as the bell resounded, and drove his victim back with volleys of blows that seemed to shoot from every side at once. The Red Man looked forlorn as well as battered. No intelligent underwriter at that moment would have insured his chances on any terms. He tried to hit back, but a small boy against an infuriated teacher would have made a better showing. He sensed this, and threw his python arms around the champion's neck and body, clinging with all that was left of his strength. Cadogan moved back a short step to give himself room, and began to pump his right fist up against the sore ribs in a series of fierce jolts that surprised his most devoted admirers. He had reached a new phase in his career. In all his other battles he had always struck while actually gliding away from the foe, so as to avoid the possibility of being hit himself; but now he was standing like a smith at the forge and putting tremendous force into each blow.

Even the robust Red Man's vitality was not proof against the volley. His arms relaxed their hold; his knees bent under his weight, and he slowly slid down the tall form of the champion as a sailor slides down a backstay. Jim tried to plant one of the right-handers on his chin as he passed, but luck or some instinctive impulse to protect himself saved the Red Man. He still retained some glimmering fraction of sense, and with the last atom of it he willed to hang on to his enemy. This was all that kept him from sprawling on the floor. Had he so sprawled he could not have roused himself before the fatal count of ten seconds.

Or had Cadogan jumped back out of the falling man's clutches he would have let him fall helpless; but he was so eager for victory that he could not think of giving ground. So there he stood, and presently the challenger was kneeling before him on one knee, clasping both arms around his left knee.

Jim stooped to push the clinging arms

away. By what trifles is history made! At that instant, as the command was passing from his mind to his hands, Jim's glance happened to fall on the train robber. He met the basilisk glare of the killer fastened upon him, and saw his stealthy hand gliding toward the gun that hung in a sling before him under a flap of his frock coat. Jim felt, too, without seeing, that his own killers were equally ready for the fray, and he knew that the moment he touched the Red Man's arms there would be wild yells of "Foul!" from the Red corner, mingled with a rush into the ring and a volley of shots from both sides.

Jim hesitated. In a flash he reasoned that victory was in his hand and that he would be foolish to throw it away in a riot and a pistol battle. The crafty Red Man clung there, resting on one knee and regaining vigor at every deep breath. Cadogan turned to the referee, who had stepped back three paces, and appealed to him by calling and gesturing to make the enemy break his grip. The referee stepped up close and ordered the Red Man to let go. He did not dare touch him, though. Any movement that could be twisted into an overt act would call out a deadly shower of bullets.

At last, with great deliberation, the kneeling man let go his grip on Cadogan, and thrust his left hand down to the floor to preserve his balance. Then, and not until then, the referee began to swing his arm up and down and count the flying seconds.

At the call of five the Red Man shook his head to clear it, and winked provokingly at his adversary. He sneered at him, too, perhaps in the hope of tempting him to hit while he was down, and so lose the contest on a foul; but the champion only laughed. So, as the referee's arm rose for the count of nine, the Red Man leaped to his feet and made a swift, plunging attack. A roar of warning burst from every quarter of the amphitheater—for the Red Man's savage recoveries were well known—but Jim was away like a startled buck.

Again he had been tricked by good judgment, for if he had stood his ground and met the attack with a straight left and one more right drive under the heart, he would have finished the Red Man right there. So wise are we historians after the event. The gong sent the two to their corners.

But where was the brilliant attack of the champion when the brazen clang next resounded? He no longer flew across the ring like a falcon darting on the prey, but walked out as slowly as his awkward enemy. To real lovers of the game Jim Cadogan's darting advance and flight about the ring had long been a spectacle as beautiful as the dancing of Genée, and now he was as flat-footed as the Red Man himself. Incredible, but there it was, plain as day. He was arm-weary, too, by reason of all the force he had burned up in his constant attack. The battle sagged. There might as well have been no seventh round.

The eighth was not much better. But it saw the beginning of a new phase: the Red Man was attacking now. Modestly as a pupil in an exhibition with his master, he ventured an inquiring left for the cheek, but it fell short. He blocked the return that Cadogan sent after it, and tried the blow again, only to see Jim backing away. He tried again; it landed lightly, but it landed. He grinned as he retired at the bell.

In the interval Cadogan frankly admitted that he was tired and was gathering his strength as he played about the square inclosure, taking care to keep a broad margin of safety between himself and the destructive right of the enemy. What he did not know, and what probably he does not know to this day, was that his two years of peaceful luxury as a rising young comedian, followed by the six weeks of fast and furious training, together with the worry about Madge, had burned out his reserve strength, the resource that must be at the call of any man who would be best among his kind.

He still rested through round after round, not yet ready to resume the lead. The Red Man got home his left attack

on the mouth and jaw two or three times in every round. "Be careful, Jim," Charley Black begged him. "He's getting to you more and more."

"Don't bother me!" Cadogan replied angrily. "He couldn't dent a roll of butter. Don't you think I'd know it if he could hurt? I'll get him when I'm ready."

The fatal thirteenth, as the superstitious call it, passed without damage, though the Red Man chuckled as he saw how cautious the champion was, and twitted him with being afraid. Jim came out angry in the next round, which was what the red fox wanted. Under the stimulus of wrath he felt stronger than before. The challenger tried again with his ineffective left, and drew away as he saw Jim gather himself for a drive.

Cadogan shot in his long, straight left for the mouth, and the Red Man gave ground for perhaps have a step; then suddenly came forward on the right foot. The long lunge left Cadogan extended and bent forward like a fencer who has thrust too far over his balance. As he started to rise, the challenger leaned to him, and swung his left fist upward with all the savage strength he had been accumulating during seven dissembling rounds, twenty-eight minutes. It shot home, sunk that queer, little soft tract any man can feel just below the A at the base of his breast bone when the muscles are relaxed.

The sky turned black, the world fell off its orbit, and Cadogan pitched headlong, all in the twinkling of an eye. But fighting instinct served him still. He caught himself before he fell quite prone, and balanced uncertainly on hands and knees. He saw the white face of the astonished referee bending over him, and was aware of his right arm rising and falling as he told off the fatal seconds. He could hear the count distinctly, even though the voices of some few scattering hundreds of the Red Man's followers were cheering. But, though he tried and tried again as he heard the count go on to seven, eight, and nine, he could not draw his

right foot up under him so as to rise and stand. His perceptive faculties were keen as ever. His brain functioned perfectly as it gave the command, "Up!" But the command was not transmitted to the leg muscles. The great central switchboard of the body had been benumbed. He had been hit on the solar plexus.

All, all was gone. Big Conny McKay was blubbering like a little boy as he and Jeff supported Cadogan with his arms over their shoulders on the way to his dressing room. The fallen champion tried to cheer Conny. He tried to cheer Bill Bradley and the rest as the pitiful procession wound slowly along. But these were simply the mechanical reactions of his stout courage. Under the smile he forced to his lips, behind the scanty words of cheer that he fetched brokenly from his clutching throat, through all his shattered, throbbing, nerve-racked frame as well as his clear mind ran one thought, a refrain

that chanted itself to him over and over and yet again: "I've lost her!" Title, fame, fortune, all the rest, he forgot.

His handlers and his valet made quick work of dressing him. He was standing before a three-paneled mirror from his traveling case, compelling his shaking hands to weave the silken folds of an Ascot scarf into their correct design when the door was swung wide and a tiny figure flashed into the room and a pair of arms circled his weary neck. He was so thunderstruck that he could not drag his hands loose from the cravat, but stood there stupefied.

"Why——" he gasped. "Why—why—what——"

"Oh, Jim!" cried Madge. "My Jim! Don't you know you are the winner? Don't you know that odious Red Man was down more than a quarter of a minute when you—ah—beat him? I don't care what that foolish referee or any one else may say. My champion!"



THE CHAMPION SALESMAN

FREDERIC J. HASKIN, author of several books, a publisher on his own account, and writer of a syndicate letter for many newspapers, is known throughout the publishing world for his ability as a salesman. He is not content to write. At frequent intervals he lays down his pen, buys a strip of mileage, and hies forth to make the editors sign contracts for his output.

Evidence of his salesmanship is cumulative and irrefutable. His friends call him "Gabby" Haskin. It is rumored that, on one occasion, when the owner of a paper had wired to him to cancel his contract, the energetic Fred-eric took the next train out of Washington, arrived travel-worn and dusty in the owner's office, and, after a conversation of less than an hour, signed up the helpless publicist for a new two-year contract. Stories of this character about him are abundant.

When the shortage in white print paper reached such a stage that many newspaper owners could not get enough of the material to run their usually large editions, a few of the poorly informed began to lament Haskin's hard luck.

"Now that the publishers have to throw away real news and at times even have to refuse advertising, owing to the scarcity of print paper," said one, "Haskin will be up against it. Naturally, they are not going to buy and use special articles. It will put a crimp into Gabby's business."

"Not on your life!" exclaimed Charlie McClintock, a fellow journalist. "A shortage of paper won't affect Haskin. He'll go on selling his stuff just the same. Why, that fellow could make a success of selling ivory toothpicks to elephants."

LOVE SONNETS OF A COWBOY

I.

I MET her, Pete, at Bailey's vaudeville show,
Where she was pulling off the cutest stunt,
Yoked with a little, yellow, played-out runt;
I wondered how she'd ever come to know
A thing like that. He hadn't roped her, though,
So I stampeded right up to the front,
Where I could hear the dago's cello grunt,
And smell the meltin' rosin on his bow.
While Gladys—that's her name—all melting-eyed,
Comes on the stage just like a budding rose.
Oh, gee! I thought she had forgot her clothes!
But never mind! She had me roped and tied,
And there I sat all helpless through the play,
Hoping she'd come and lead this duck away.

II.

And she was like molasses; I the fly
That buzzes round in search of something sweet,
And when I asked her if she'd come and eat
At Swellgrub's, where the gaudy spendthrifts hie,
"Just lead me to it!" murmured she, and I
Left two weeks' wages in that hash retreat.
But Gladys 's got the cost of living beat,
And with her even spuds don't seem so high.
And all the time I tried to play the game,
And blow my bucks as if they'd come from home,
For drinks that never saw the sudses foam,
And other stuff that had 'a foreign name.
I tell you, Pete, this Gladys person, she
Can feed on the last yen that's found on me.

III.

I'm scheduled now to spend a week in town,
And every night I see her at the show.
I've learned a hundred things I didn't know,
One is, that Love will often make a clown
Of wisest wise ones, just to throw them down.
But, Pete, fools always want another throw
Before they'll gather up their duds and go,
So I'll stay in the game and be done brown—
Or else I'll be the fool that wins the prize.
Say, now she eats with me 'most every night,
And Pete, hers ain't no two-bits appetite,
And feed of every brand right on the rise.
And say, Old Pard, you need not think it strange
If I come on my uppers to the range!

WILL LISENBEE.

Shoe-string Stuff

By Everett Mitchell

Going into the manufacture of motion pictures in the poor man's way, with two partners and a combined capital of just three hundred and fifty dollars. *It can be done. Everything is possible to the man who wills*

I GUESS most of you people who go to picture shows know the Coliseum Film Company's program. Pretty good pictures, aren't they? Sure. And four or five times a year you see one under our brand featuring Myrtle Santone and labeled "A James A. Bragg Feature," or "Produced under the supervision of James A. Bragg," and it's a hummer, you bet! Maybe you do, and probably you don't, read farther down on the title, where it says "Photography by Charles Mackley," but that's me, Charlie Mackley. How do you do?

The other camera men get their names on the screen, too, but I'm the only one that Bragg will use on any of Myrtle Santone's stuff. She's particular, and so's he, and besides I've known them both since Hector was a little dog, which means a whole lot.

Bragg is director general of the Coliseum Film Company, Incorporated, and makes more money than the President of the United States, I guess. Myrtle Santone is—Myrtle Santone, big star—and Charlie Mackley is still turning a crank—from choice. But we all started out together as you might say, and, although you read their names on the screen and don't bother to look at mine, I'm not a bit jealous, so you should worry.

You don't have to go very far back in this business to find ancient history. Not many of the producing companies that we have nowadays are over four years old, and so, when I talk about the good old days when Myrtle Santone and Jimmy Bragg were working hard for their weekly envelopes, I

don't mean that they ought to be pensioned now—either of them. No, sir!

It was in the old Triumph company—they've consolidated with the Chicago Features now. I was camera man, Bragg was doing character, small parts, anything he could get, and this Myrtle party was leading lady. We were making one-reel comedies out at the Glendale studio and getting along all right, considering the difficulties we had to work under.

Seems like most picture companies I've worked with have had some sort of a jingo, and the particular difficulty with the Triumph was the director, Warren Carmichael. He was one of these windy, bullyin' guys that ragged his people all over the lot when things didn't go to suit him, which they frequently didn't. He never had much to say to me. He knew I wouldn't stand for it, and camera men were scarce in those days, but he sure took it out on the rest of 'em. All except Myrtle. He was kind of soft on her, I guess. Anyway, whatever she said or did was usually O. K. with Carmichael.

Bragg and I were pretty chummy outside of working hours. I liked him even then, although I couldn't have too much to do with him on the lot because I was making about twice as much as he was. Salary has a lot to do with social position in the picture game.

He was a live wire, Jimmy was, never still a minute and always poking his nose into things that couldn't possibly concern a second-rate actor. Also any one could see that he was dead gone on Myrtle Santone, and that she didn't

care two feet of spoiled film for him—salary difference again maybe. But she took just enough notice of him to make Carmichael peevish, and he came near to firing Jimmy several times.

Bragg was always offering suggestions to Carmichael about running his picture, which is always bad taste from a second rater. The fact that they were good points, which he ought to have seen himself, didn't make it any easier for Carmichael. Things got pretty strained after a while, and I was looking to see something pop 'most any time.

It happened, just as I expected, one afternoon late in summer. We had gone down to the river bed to finish a picture, and were hurrying like the mischief to get through before the light went bad. We had only one more scene to make, and Bragg was in it, playing the cruel father of the eloping girl, which was Myrtle. We'd made quite a lot of footage of Bragg fishing to use for cut-backs to break the chase, and in this scene the fellow and the girl were supposed to have lost their way after they left the minister's and to run onto the old man fishing and helping himself to a bottle of beer, both of which he'd always said were against his principles, especially on Sunday. He has to come through with his blessing to keep them from giving him away, and that was the end of the picture.

Carmichael was all ready to rehearse, but Myrtle was talking to Bragg over on his rock, and didn't hear him call. Carmichael walked over and stuck his face in between them.

"Look here," he said, "if you two would take a little more interest in this picture and less in each other, maybe we could finish before it's pitch dark."

Myrtle jumped back, kind of red in the face. You see, she didn't care a rap for Bragg, and it made her sore to get called down on his account. Bragg looked like he wanted to say something, too, but he didn't, and we went ahead and finished the scene. Myrtle wouldn't speak to Bragg after that, and we were all ready to start

for home when Carmichael suddenly stopped and tore his hair.

"Wait!" he yelled. "That last scene was all wrong. We'll have to do it over."

"Why?" asked Myrtle, pretty cross. She'd had all of Bragg's fatherly hugging she wanted for one day.

"You and Saunders came in from the wrong side," says Carmichael. "When we had Bragg fishing on the rock he registered surprise, looking *downstream*, and you two came in from *upstream*. Didn't you notice that?" he asked, turning to Bragg.

"I did," said Jimmy.

"Well, why didn't you tell me?" snarled Carmichael. "Too busy gassing with Myrtle, wasn't you?"

Jimmy walked over to him and looked him right in the eye.

"I'm through advising boneheads," he said, real quiet, "and if you say another word about Miss Santone, I'll knock you into the water. We'll make the scene over, and then I'm done."

"You bet you're done!" howled Carmichael. "You're fired!"

"No, I'm not," snapped Jimmy. "I've quit."

Well, we did the scene over, nobody having much to say, and on the way back to the autos Myrtle dropped back to speak to Jimmy. They were walking right in front of me, so I couldn't help hearing her.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Bragg," said Myrtle. "I'm afraid it was my fault."

Jimmy jumped, and looked at her real close, but I could see that she was just sorry that she'd been the cause of his losing his job. There wasn't anything personal in it. Jimmy could see it, too, I guess, because after a minute he turned away.

"Don't you worry about that, Myrtle," he said. "I've had it coming to me a good while."

This was on Monday, as I remember it. I didn't see Bragg the rest of the week at all, and on Friday Carmichael and I had an argument about some retakes. I'd told him his location wouldn't photograph, but he insisted on working there, so when the negative came out

too thin to print he tried to say I had stopped down on him on purpose.

So Saturday night I drew my money and told 'em I was moving on. I told 'em some other things about the Triumph company, too, that I'd been saving quite a while. They didn't want me to quit even then, and offered me a raise, but I was through.

Downtown that evening, the first person I ran across was Jimmy Bragg.

"Hello, Charlie," he said, "you're just the boy I want to see. How's everything up at the Triumph?"

I told him the Triumph was about as usual, and he asked about a lot of the people and wound up with Myrtle.

"Has she said anything about me?" he asked hopefully.

I told him that when we ran that last film at the studio I'd heard her say that he looked like a monkey in one of the close-ups. That shut him up quick enough. I didn't want him to cherish any hopes in that direction. I knew it was no use. Then I told him about my quitting the Triumph, and that brought him back to what he was going to say in the first place.

"Let's go up to your room," he said. "I've got something big, and I want to talk it over with you."

"I went up to see Englehardt about a job yesterday," said Jimmy later, when we had shed our coats and the cigarettes were going good. "Told him I was a director and hinted that I was willing to make a few pictures for him if we could agree on terms. Oh, yes, it was nifty all right. The old boy laughed at me at first, said he had all the directors he needed and so on, but I stayed right with him and wouldn't take no. At last he held up his hands and said: 'Young man, I haven't any place for you, but I admire your nerve, and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you an order for a picture—one-reel drama. Do it somewhere away from here. Get some responsible men behind you, form a company, and if your first picture is good, I'll give you a contract for one a week.'

"Wait a minute," I said. 'Just put

that in writing.' And blamed if he didn't do it. Here it is."

Jimmy handed me one of Englehardt's letterheads, and sure enough the old boy had written it out just as Jimmy said. I read it over real close, and couldn't see anything wrong with it.

"I can't find the joker," I told him finally, "but there must be one somewhere. Englehardt isn't contracting to buy pictures off of every boob that comes around and says he's a director."

"I hinted at that after I got my wind back," answered Jimmy, "and he said that of course he wouldn't take the picture if it was rotten; I'd have to gamble on that, but that everything that came out of his studio had a sameness about it in spite of everything he could do, and that what he was after was something worked out along different lines and with a different personality back of it. Sounds reasonable, doesn't it?"

It sounded reasonable all right, and I couldn't think of much to say against it.

"I'll get capital," Jimmy went on. "I'll find some fellows with money who want to break into the picture game, and we'll put this over right."

"Can you do it, Jimmy?" I asked.

"Do it!" he snapped, misunderstanding me. "Didn't I just the same as carry those pictures for Carmichael? You know I can do it, Charlie."

"Get the capital, I mean," said I. "I've heard that people with money are awful scary about trusting it to strangers."

"Leave that to me," he answered. "I'll get the money all right, with this contract, and don't hunt for another job. You're engaged as camera man at seventy-five a week."

"All right," I said, laughing. "When do I go to work?"

"I'll see you again in a day or two," he answered. "I'm going to put this over. You watch me."

That was Jimmy Bragg all over. He just couldn't see the difficulties in anything. He had to have money to start his company, and so he was going to ask somebody to give it to him, never

doubting that he'd get it. A little matter like floating a company didn't bother Jimmy any.

It was nearly a week before I saw him again, and then one night he crawled up to the room, looking as if he hadn't a friend left on earth. He just came in and sat staring at the floor for about five minutes, and didn't even answer when I said good evening.

"Would you believe it, Charlie!" he said at last. "I've hunted this town high and low, and I can't find anybody who will put a nickel into this scheme!"

I couldn't help but grin; he'd been so cocksure of what he was going to do. But it was the last grin I indulged in for quite a while.

"Would you believe it!" said Jimmy again. "Why, some of 'em wouldn't even listen after I said 'moving pictures,' and one fellow advised me to go and be a book agent; it paid better!"

"Of course," I said, "you told them you were an experienced director and all that."

"Well," he admitted, "I had to blow my horn a little, didn't I? I couldn't expect 'em to back me if I told 'em my last job was doing character for Triumph. I merely hinted that I had had considerable experience, and flashed the contract to show that Englehardt has confidence in me."

"No, I suppose not," I told him. "Maybe you underdid it, Jimmy; maybe you were too modest."

I had a picture of Jimmy explaining his qualifications as a director or a secretary of the treasury or anything else under the sun that he wanted to be.

"You needn't laugh," he growled.

"The city people are too cautious," I said. "Why don't you try the small towns like Watts or Alhambra? They say these country capitalists——"

"Shut up!" snapped Jimmy. "I want to think."

Well, I lighted a cigarette, and smoked it through, and Jimmy sat there and ran his fingers through his hair. Pretty soon he picked up a pencil, and

began to figure on the back of an envelope. After a while he looked up, and I could see he'd hit on something.

"How much have you got in the bank, Charlie?" he asked.

Even then I didn't get wise. I never could hold on to money, and all I'd ever salted away was just enough to keep me going for a month or two when I was loafing. Camera jobs were easy to get in those days. I thought he was broke probably, and wanted me to stake him until he landed another job. But I didn't know Jimmy Bragg.

"Oh, a couple of hundred," I said. "Do you need any?"

He didn't answer, but added up a column of figures on the envelope.

"Good!" he said. "I've got a hundred and fifty myself. That'll just about make it."

Even then I didn't get him.

"Make what?" I asked.

Jimmy leaned over and tapped me on the knee.

"Listen here, Charlie," he said. "We'll put this over between us, just you and me, and we'll hog all the profits. Those boobs didn't know a good thing when it was shoved right under their noses. All right, we'll leave 'em out of it. I was trying to get backing for twenty thousand dollars to form a company and build a studio. Now we'll go at it the poor man's way. You and I can put out a one-reeler for three hundred and fifty dollars if we're careful."

Say, honest, you could have knocked me right off my chair with a toothpick, but before I could get my wind back Jimmy rattled on, without giving me a chance to head him off:

"What's the most important thing to a producing company? The market, isn't it? And we've got the market right off the bat. Englehardt will pay from seventy-five cents to a dollar a foot at least for our negative and take one a week. That'll give us from seven hundred and fifty to a thousand dollars a week income, and later on we can make him raise the ante. We've got three hundred and fifty dollars.

All we have to do is to keep our expenses on the first picture inside that and we're fixed.

"I'll do the directing and play the lead to save a salary. You do the camera work and other details that I can't look after. There's another big saving. We'll use a small-cast story and hire the cheapest people we can get and still have good acting. Then we'll have everything doped out beforehand, so that we can do the actual shooting in two days. That will keep down the pay roll."

By this time I was able to sit up and register astonishment a little.

"Say," I said as sarcastically as I could, "you don't think I'm foolish or anything like that, do you, Jimmy?"

"No, sir," he answered promptly, not noticing the sarcasm. "If I did, I wouldn't be taking you for a partner."

Can you beat that for nerve?

"You're crazy!" I told him.

"Not a chance," said Jimmy.

"What'll you do for a studio?"

"There ain't going to be no studio—not for the first picture, anyway, or the next two or three. I'm going to write the scenarios myself, and I'll arrange so there won't be any interiors. That'll be a novelty in itself besides saving money."

"How about retakes?" said I. "Suppose you find some bum scenes after the money's all spent?"

"There ain't going to be no retakes, either," answered Jimmy. "That's why I've got a camera man for a partner instead of hiring one. No retakes. You'll have to give me a thousand feet of picture out of twelve hundred feet of film."

Just like that!

Well, we talked and talked, and every objections I could raise he argued down so quick it made my head swim, and all the time, mind you, he was taking it for granted that I was in on the scheme. That was Jimmy Bragg all over—is now, for that matter. When he has argued me dumb he tossed me the envelope with his figures. The items ran about like this:

1,200 feet of negative film @ 4c.....	\$48.00
Finishing same @ 1c.....	12.00
(About) 975 feet positive film finished, including titles, @ 6c. (about).....	58.50
Leading lady, 2 days, @ \$10.....	20.00
Character man, 2 days, @ \$7.50.....	15.00
Two other people, 2 days, @ \$5.....	20.00
Five extras, 1 day, @ \$3.....	15.00
Auto hire	30.00
Incidentals (tips, locations, et cetera) ..	25.00

Total

That left a small margin for accidents.

"How about a camera?" I asked.

"Can't you borrow one?" said Jimmy

"Not that I know of," I answered.

"Well, don't let that worry you," said he. "I'll get one if I have to steal it."

I sat down and mopped my brow. His pace was too swift for me.

"There now," said Jimmy amiably. "I guess we've got everything settled for the present. We won't need your money for a couple of days. You can draw it out then. Go to bed if you want to. I'm going to write out that scenario. I've had the idea in my head for quite a while, but I'll have to change it some to dodge the interiors."

Then he peeled off his coat and started in.

I went to bed; there was nothing else to do, and I felt a little dizzy. I didn't sleep well—wasn't used to the light in the room—and every time I woke up there was Jimmy at the table, scribbling away on the paper my laundry had come back in.

"Gee," he murmured once when I rolled over, "if I only had Myrtle Santone for this part!"

I went to sleep finally, and the next time I woke Jimmy was shaking me. It was just daylight, and the milk wagons were driving past.

"Read that, old hoss!" said Jimmy, thrusting the sheets of wrapping paper into my hands. Then he rolled over across the bed just as he was—dead to the world.

I couldn't see any more sleep for me, so I dressed and went downtown for breakfast. In the restaurant I read Jimmy's scenario. Even I could see that it was a corker, and he had ar-

ranged it so that there wasn't an interior scene in the picture. Everything could be photographed out in the open, which meant a big saving. For the first time I began to think that perhaps we might put the thing over.

Then I read the thing over again. He'd called it "On Mercy Mountain"—a sort of Kentucky feud story—and sure enough the girl's part fitted Myrtle Santone to a T. He'd had her in mind all right when he wrote the story. But Myrtle was drawing down her hundred a week in comedy, and that settled it for us.

I waited until about noon, and then went back to the room. Jimmy was just up.

Well, I fell for the scheme, all right, and then the trouble commenced. I drew out my money, and let Jimmy handle the financial end of the deal, and he started right in elaborating his story. He found there was an old bridge that the county was going to replace, and they agreed to let him blow it up for fifty dollars. That kind of a stunt wouldn't hardly be noticed in a picture now, but in those days it was a novelty.

Another thing we hadn't figured on was the camera. We had to buy one—couldn't beg, borrow, or steal one anywhere—and that made another big hole in our finances. We paid a deposit of fifty dollars, as I remember it, and agreed to pay the balance when we finished the picture if the machine was satisfactory.

That left something like fifteen dollars between us the evening before we started to shoot. We'd deposited just enough in a checking account to cover our pay roll and other expenses.

I remember Jimmy had some errand or other that night, and left me to go out to dinner alone. I wasn't feeling any too cheerful, in spite of the big stunt coming off the next day. I'm always that way. As soon as I'm out of money I lose my nerve. My room rent had been due for two days now, and I'd got to sneaking out the back way so's not to meet the landlady. I'd never missed the day before.

IIA P

Well, I started downtown with about six dollars in my pocket, and headed for a dairy lunch, where I could get a fifteen-cent meal, when who should I run into but Myrtle Santone! Of course we stopped and chatted a minute, and then all of a sudden she put her arm through mine and said:

"Take me to dinner somewhere, Charlie; I'm lonesome."

Well, I thought of that six bucks, and hesitated, but a fellow can't very well turn a girl down when she makes a talk like that, so we went. I steered her into as cheap a place as I dared, but even at that I knew it would cost me about three dollars at least.

We had a good meal, and of course some of the people there recognized Myrtle. I could see 'em nudge each other and point her out to their friends. Myrtle was sure looking a queen that night, and any other time I'd have been tickled to death to be seen with her, but this time I could hardly enjoy the meal for thinking about the check. Myrtle went right on talking, though, without noticing how quiet I was. She asked me where I was working, and I told her I hadn't landed a steady job yet.

"I've left the Triumph, too," she said. "I've had an offer of a hundred and fifty a week from another company."

"Comedy?" I asked.

"No, drama," she answered. "No more comedy for me; I'm sick of it."

She waited for me to ask what company she had had the offer from, but I wasn't interested. The waiter brought the check. It was two eighty-five. I paid it, and while we were performing on the finger bowls Myrtle suggested that we take in a show. But I couldn't see it—not on the three bones I had left, so I told her I was sorry, but I had to be in early because I was working the next day. She insisted on knowing where, so finally I had to tell her the whole thing.

The scheme sounded so blamed thin and improbable when I came to talk about it that I sort of polished it up some; I had to. I thought I might as well leave myself out of it, and blame

Jimmy for the whole thing. It was his scheme at first, anyway. So I told her that Jimmy had put every cent he had in the world into the thing, and that if it didn't pan out he was a ruined man and so on. I think I made a pretty good yarn out of it. Anyway, Myrtle was a whole lot interested, and asked plenty of questions.

That darn waiter came around to clear off the table, and looked at me so sharp I knew I'd ought to order drinks if we kept the table any longer. That cost four bits more.

Then Myrtle wanted to hear about the scenario, so I told her the story, bridge explosion and all. When I had finished she said we might as well go, as she was tired anyway, so that was all right.

When I got home the landlady was in the front hall, so I went around to the alley and in the back way.

Jimmy was in the room. He'd moved in with me to save expense. He had the camera and the raw film. I tested her out as well as I could, and then shut myself in the closet and loaded the magazines. I didn't say anything to him about meeting Myrtle. I was afraid he would guy me about spending the three and a half.

We went to breakfast early the next morning, and then back to the room to get the camera. The landlady called out to Jimmy that there was some one waiting to see him in the parlor.

"Somebody looking for a job, I guess," said Jimmy to me, and we went in. There sat Myrtle Santone—and a suit case.

"Good morning, Mr. Bragg," said Myrtle. "I've come to be in your picture."

Jimmy stood gasping for a minute, and then jumped over and grabbed both her hands.

"Myrtle!" he shouted. "Say, this is great! I wrote that story for you, but I didn't dare hope I'd have you to play it."

Myrtle smiled and looked pleased, and I didn't know what to say. Jimmy asked her if she could go right to work, and seemed surprised to find that she

knew almost as much about the picture as he did.

"But, good Lord, Jimmy!" I said when I got him out in the hall, "We can't afford to pay her price."

"Don't you worry," he answered. "I'll stall her off until we get the money or something. Myrtle Santone in my picture! Gee!"

"But see here," I said. "You don't understand. She has an offer of a hundred and fifty a week now."

"How do you know that?" he asked.

So I had to tell him the whole thing. Then he went back into the parlor, and I chased upstairs to get the camera. I felt like a chump.

We got the company together finally, and started out. The girl Jimmy had engaged to play the lead raised an awful fuss when she found that Myrtle was to have her place, and we had to pay her full time for the two days to get rid of her.

But we got on location at last, and started work. Jimmy turned out to be some little director, and maybe you think Myrtle wasn't a bear in her part. Jimmy had picked a good bunch to work with, too, and we shot scene after scene with scarcely any rehearsing. Every time there was a minute or two to spare he'd come around behind the camera and give me a dig in the ribs and grin. We shot over six hundred feet of picture the first day.

Jimmy called me one side when we were ready to start for home.

"How much is there in the treasury, Charlie?" he asked. "Outside of expenses, I mean."

I put my hand in my pocket. I didn't have to take out the money to count it. There were two dollars, a half, and two dimes.

"I've got two dollars and seventy cents," I reported. "You know where mine went."

"I've got about five-fifty myself," said Jimmy, "and I was wondering if it wouldn't be good business for us to take the star out to dinner."

"You go ahead," I said, seeing he wanted to and would have gone any-

way, "but one of us doing the honors is enough. Me for a dairy lunch."

"I don't want to hog all the fun," he began doubtfully.

"Don't mind me, son," I said. "I'm going down to the laboratory to make sure we're getting this all on the film."

I put in most of the night in the dark room and made them run through every foot of film we'd taken. I sure had a pretty negative, too. Not a retake in the bunch as far as I could see. Jimmy was in bed when I got home, but wasn't asleep yet.

"How is it?" he asked.

"All good," said I. "Jimmy, I begin to think we're going to get away with this."

"Sure we are," said Jimmy.

Next morning we got a good start, and everything went as smooth as greased clockwork. By noon we'd finished every scene except the bridge explosion. Jimmy had decided to shoot that last for fear of accidents.

Jimmy had no idea how much dynamite it takes to make a good-sized explosion, so he bought plenty to be on the safe side, and he planted all of it. Then he had me set the camera as close as we could get and still have the whole bridge in the picture. Myrtle was to come running down the road and across the bridge just before the explosion happened.

We got all set, and Myrtle started running. I panorammed to catch her coming down the road, and gave her a slow crank across the bridge. As soon as she was out of the field I stopped turning and turned to Jimmy.

"All right," he said. "Get back, everybody! We're ready for the fireworks."

They all moved back about a hundred feet and left me alone with that bridge. I tell you I felt queer, and I don't think any one envied me my job.

"We're ready when you are, Charlie," called Bragg. He had his battery and key back there with the rest. "Start turning, and when I see your hand move I'll touch her off. Keep going until it is all over and the smoke has blown away."

I took a long breath, and glued my eye to the ground glass, ready to panoram if anything worth catching went sidewise. Then I started to crank.

I don't remember hearing any noise. I saw a cloud of black smoke come out under the timbers of that bridge. Then the shock of the explosion hit me and nearly blew me away from behind the machine, but I held on to the crank, and never missed a turn. Pretty soon I could see in the ground glass pieces of bridge begin to fall back into the stream, and I was just going to turn around and grin at Jimmy when—zowie!—something struck the top of the camera and the back of my head, and put us both down for the count.

I wasn't knocked clear out, and I knew when Jimmy and the rest ran up and separated my anatomy from the camera's, but I felt pretty groggy. A five-foot piece of two-by-four had come down on top of the camera, crushing it in as if it had been a cigar box. If the stick hadn't hit the camera first, my head would have represented the cigar box.

"Good Lord!" I heard Jimmy cry. "The camera is smashed!"

Myrtle was holding my head in her lap, and she held me down when I tried to sit up.

"Let me see it," I groaned.

I knew there wasn't over a hundred and fifty feet of exposed film in the magazine, because I'd filled one magazine and changed in the forenoon; but if that hundred and fifty was spoiled the whole thing might as well be as far as we were concerned. Jimmy brought the camera over, and he was as white as a sheet. She was a wreck all right, but when I pried down among the splinters I found the magazines weren't hurt a bit. All the film we had lost was what was actually threaded through the sprockets, and the explosion scene would be all right, even if we did have to cut it short at the end. I tell you that took a big load off our minds until we thought of the camera.

"What do you suppose it will cost to fix it?" asked Jimmy.

"About two hundred bucks," I said.
 "Good night!"

We perked up a little, though, when we got home, figuring we'd have money enough in a day or two to square everything up and mend the machine besides. We paid every one off but Myrtle. Jimmy said he'd make it all right with her, and I left that to him.

It took us nearly all the next day to cut our negative. We were away over on footage, and it was a hard job to get the thing down to standard length, but we did it at last. Next day we got our positive and titles, and when we made out the check for the laboratory it left us a balance of one dollar and seventy cents in the bank, which we decided to leave for luck.

That evening we took the reel to a little theater way out in the suburbs to try it out. Jimmy insisted on asking Myrtle, so we phoned her to meet us downtown. Jimmy wanted to have a taxi, but I put my foot on that, so we went out on the car like other people.

At the theater, we found seats back in the corner. It was near the end of the first show, and they had promised to run our reel as a chaser, so we didn't have long to wait. Jimmy was nervous, and when they flashed our title at last he sat up as stiff as a poker and I don't think he noticed he was holding Myrtle's hand.

I was good and nervous myself, but as scene after scene came off I quit looking at the screen and watched the audience. It was getting 'em all right, and when it came to the bridge explosion you could hear oh's and ah's all over the house. We'd cut about a foot of film where I stopped the camera, and that brought the explosion right up to the point where Myrtle ran off the bridge. That kind of stuff wouldn't get a rise out of an audience now, but in those days it was new, as I said.

When it was over Jimmy settled back in his seat, white and tired.

"Well," he said weakly, "it'll do."

"You bet!" said I.

"Do!" cried Myrtle. "Why, it's

great, Jimmy!" And I don't think she noticed he was still holding her hand.

Myrtle took his arm when we got outside. He seemed dazed.

"Let's go home now, if you don't mind," he said. "I feel sort of let down. To tell the truth, I haven't had much sleep lately."

Next morning Jimmy took the reel up to Englehardt, and I stayed in the room thinking about the feed we were going to have that night. In an hour he was back, looking pretty sober.

"Englehardt's out of town," he said. "Won't be back till Monday."

I felt sick, and had to sit down on the bed. Monday was three days off. Jimmy sat down beside me.

"Problem: Can two men live three days on two dollars?" he asked. "And, oh, yes, by the way, there's a man downstairs to see you. He's from the camera company, I think."

"To see me! What for?" I asked.

"Well, it's this way," Jimmy explained apologetically. "These people had heard of you, but they didn't know me from Adam, so I sort of made the deal in your name—told 'em you would be responsible, you know. You'll have to go down and stall him off for a few days."

Well, I've had to do lots of hard things in my young life, but I don't recall anything that took more nerve than for me to go downstairs and talk to that collector. I'm a simple, honest sort of a cuss, and the tricks of high finance are away outside my fender. If I owe a bill, I'm uneasy until it's paid, and I'd never been broke before. I stammered through some sort of an explanation about not being quite satisfied with the camera yet, and told him to come back Monday afternoon. He wasn't very well satisfied, but he yielded.

I won't bother you with the details of the rest of that week. We lived through it, although we had only one meal apiece on Sunday. Monday morning, bright and early, Jimmy set off to see Englehardt. By noon he was back—without the reel and carrying a face as long as a donkey's ear.

"What did he say, Jimmy?" I asked hopefully.

"We ran it through at the studio, and then he said he was too busy to talk, but to leave the positive and he would see me in a day or so."

That was a poser, with the camera fellow coming in the afternoon for his money and my professional honor pledged that he should have it. I made Jimmy go down with me to see him when he arrived, and we stated our case plainly, but didn't seem to impress him any. In fact, he was pretty short.

"Nothing doing on an extension, gentlemen," said he. "You seem to have a very unbusinesslike way of handling your creditors. We will have to have half the amount by this time tomorrow or close the account and start proceedings against you."

And we couldn't budge him from that.

After he left, we went downtown and pawned our watches. We had to eat somehow, but I for one was pretty blue. I tell you it was a new experience for me, and a good, steady, crank-turning job at fifty or sixty a week looked to me right then to be the most desirable thing in the world. When we got back there was a message from Myrtle asking us to dinner with her mother and herself at their apartment. I didn't want to go, but Jimmy insisted, and blew himself to a big bunch of violets for the occasion, so I had to invest in candy.

The old lady turned out to be a pretty good scout, and entertained me fine, although, goodness knows, I was blue enough. Myrtle wasn't having an easy time with Jimmy, either. They were in the next room, and I could see them through the big door. She must have asked him what time it was or something, for I saw him shake his head. Then she laughed and made a grab at his pocket, and saw his watch wasn't there. Then he told her the whole thing, I guess, for pretty soon she got up and walked over to the window and stood with her back to him, cuddling his violets against her breast. We left soon after that.

Things came to a show-down the next day. Right after noon the room phone rang and Jimmy answered it.

"There's a gentleman downstairs to see me," he said. "It's hardly likely that Englehardt would come here, and yet that camera man would probably ask for you."

He went down, and when he didn't come back in a few minutes I got so nervous that I followed him. As I passed the door, I glanced in, and there sat Englehardt and Jimmy. Right there my heart gave a big jump. I thought our troubles were over.

But they weren't.

Jimmy saw me, and motioned for me to come in. He introduced me to Englehardt as his partner. Englehardt cleared his throat, and looked at me over his glasses.

"I was just telling Mr. Bragg here," he said importantly, "that while I admire the pluck that you two have shown in working this film on your own responsibility, it would be useless for me to try to do business with you. In the first place, Mr. Bragg informs me that you have no capital and no backing, and you simply can't go ahead on a shoe string, as you have done. In fact, I was about to say that inasmuch as you have used Myrtle Santone in your picture I will give you fifty cents a foot for your negative. Miss Santone is considering an offer from me which she will doubtless accept, and in that case I can use the film some time as one of her releases."

"But," I stammered, "it cost us more than that to make it."

"Doubtless, doubtless it did," smiled Englehardt, "but that is all it would be worth to me." And he pulled out his check book.

"But this is outrageous, Mr. Englehardt!" stormed Jimmy. "We don't consider any such offer."

But the old codger only smiled. He knew he had us in a corner.

"All right," he said, putting up his check book. "It doesn't make any difference to me. I was merely willing to take the thing off your hands to save you a loss."

Jimmy glared at him helplessly. He was whipped, and he knew it.

"We—we'll have to talk this over," he stammered. "Excuse us a moment, please."

He drew me out in the hall, and there were tears in his eyes.

"Charlie, old boy," he said huskily, "if it wasn't for you, I'd see him in Hades before I'd let him have it at any such price. But we're stuck with that camera bill, and it looks as if we were at the end of our rope."

Just then the camera dealer arrived and took a seat in the lobby. That decided us, I guess, for we'd both lost our nerve.

"Charlie, I got you into this," Jimmy said, "and I want to do all I can to get you out. If there's anything left after this camera bill is paid, it goes to you."

"No, you don't, Jimmy," said I, although it made me feel good to have him talk like that. "We're partners straight through. I went into this with my eyes open. Go in and get his check."

Jimmy went back into the parlor, and I started toward the camera pest, when I saw the landlady beckoning me from the telephone. Myrtle was on the line.

"Is Jimmy Bragg there, Charlie?" she asked when I told her who it was.

"He's busy with Mr. Englehardt right now," I said, and I heard her give a gasp.

"Has he closed with him yet?" she asked quickly. I said he was just closing.

"Now listen, Charlie Mackley," she said hurriedly, "and try to get this straight. I saw Englehardt this morning. He's my hundred-and-fifty-dollar offer. He'd just seen your picture, but I didn't think he'd act so quick. I'm coming right over. Tell Jimmy to ask three times as much as Englehardt offers and not to close till I get there. Good-by." And bang! went the receiver.

I fairly ran back into the parlor. Englehardt was just taking out his check book again. I called Jimmy out.

"Say!" I whispered. "Myrtle just

called up and says to ask three times as much as he offers and not to close till she can get here."

Jimmy stared, then he gasped, then he brightened.

"It's a hunch!" he exclaimed gleefully. "We'll do that little thing exactly."

He went back into the parlor, wearing a broad grin.

"My partner has changed his mind," he said sweetly. "I guess we won't sell, Mr. Englehardt."

"Eh?" said Englehardt. He could see that something had happened.

"Unless you are willing to pay what the picture is worth," Jimmy went on quietly: "say—a dollar and a half a foot."

Well, Englehardt went straight up in the air at that, but Jimmy only smiled and refused to dicker, while I sat on the edge of my chair and didn't dare to breathe. I was afraid the old coot would quit on us, but he stuck, and finally raised the ante to seventy-five cents. Jimmy only smiled, and refused to do business. He had his nerve back, and was going to give Englehardt a run for his money.

After the longest five minutes that I ever spent in this world, a taxi dashed up to the curb, and Myrtle came running up the steps. I heard her asking for Mr. Bragg at the office. Then she burst into the parlor, and after that it was like watching a play.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Bragg," said Myrtle, backing off. "Are you busy?"

"Oh, come right in, Miss Santone," Jimmy answered, taking his cue. "Mr. Englehardt is trying to buy our picture, but we have quite finished. We can't agree on price at all." He nodded at the old coot to indicate that the call was over.

Englehardt cleared his throat, and looked uncomfortable.

"This young man is very foolish," he growled. "I offered him a fair price for his picture, but he's way out of reason."

"Is that so?" cooed Myrtle. "How much is he asking?"

"A dollar and a half a foot," put in Jimmy.

"Is that unreasonable, Mr. Englehardt?" Myrtle inquired.

"Yes, it is!" he snapped. "I've offered him half—and that's too much."

"Why?" asked Myrtle innocently. "Isn't the picture good?"

"The picture's all right," growled Englehardt, "and your work is good, Miss Santone. That's why I am willing to buy it. I can use the picture as one of your releases if you accept my offer."

Myrtle smiled at him sweetly. She was enjoying herself.

"But I'm not going to accept your offer, Mr. Englehardt," she said. "You see, I've had a—a better one."

"Eh? How's that?" shouted Englehardt. "A better one! Who from?"

Myrtle began to blush.

"Mr. Bragg made me a better one last night," she said, and Jimmy suddenly went white and grabbed the arms of his chair.

"How much did he offer you?" snarled Englehardt, looking daggers at Jimmy. "Have you accepted yet?"

"He doesn't know I've accepted—yet," answered Myrtle, with a little catch in her throat. "It wasn't exactly a matter of money. It was—oh, so much better than that, Mr. Englehardt. He offered to marry me."

Jimmy was on his feet in an instant.

"Myrtle!" he cried. "Myrtle!" And he couldn't seem to find anything more to say.

Englehardt sat looking from one to the other of them as if he wanted to bite, and then a smile started somewhere down among the creases of his fat neck, and he began to chuckle as he hauled out his check book.

"You win," he grinned, and wrote Jimmy a check for fifteen hundred bucks. Then he got up and shook hands all around.

"Bring your negative out to the studio to-morrow," he said. "If you're bound to go ahead with this thing, we'll have to get together on a release arrangement. Good afternoon."

When he had gone Jimmy just stood there with the check in his hand looking at Myrtle, and she put her hands over her face as if she just didn't dare look at him. Then he held out his arms, and she tumbled into them, hiding her face against his shoulder, and he was stroking her hair and whispering all sorts of love stuff in her ear, and, Lord, they'd forgotten I was on earth!

I didn't know whether to go or stay, and I fidgeted around like a cat on a hot sidewalk. After a while they seemed to become aware that there was another party present, and then I went up and grabbed Jimmy's hand and tried to say something. I was going to shake hands with Myrtle, too, but when I started to do it she put her arms around my neck and kissed me and said: "Oh, Charlie, I'm so happy!" And darned if she wasn't crying!

And that's the end of the reel as far as the ladies are concerned, but for the benefit of the men I'll add a little more footage. We paid up everything, and I took my profit and quit.

Bragg thought, of course, I'd go in with him on another picture, but I was through.

"Nothing doing!" I told him. "No more shoe-string stuff in mine. I wouldn't go through the last few days again for all the film contracts this side of paradise. I'll be camera man, best man, godfather, or anything else you want me to be—on a salary basis, but high finance is not for me."

So Jimmy concluded to get married right away and take his wife into partnership. They made a rattling fine team, too, and did some mighty fine work for Englehardt. About a year later the Coliseum company was organized, and Bragg and Englehardt hold seventy-five per cent of the stock.

And just as soon as the concern was started, Jimmy sent for me and made me chief of his camera staff, and here I am. I've got a nice block of Coliseum stock, too, which came to me in the mail the day after the company was incorporated, and, although I've never asked, I know it was Myrtle who sent it.

The Wire Devils

By Frank L. Packard

Author of "On the Iron at Big Cloud," Etc.

IV.—THE LEAD CAPSULE

THE Hawk, ensconced in a wicker lounging chair in the observation car of the Coast Limited, was apparently engrossed in the financial page of his newspaper, and apparently quite oblivious of his fellow travelers, some four or five of whom lounged and smoked in their own respective wicker chairs around him. On a little pad of paper which he held in his left hand, he might even, without serious tax upon the imagination, have appeared to be calculating the effect of the market's fluctuations upon personal, and perhaps narrowly held, margins—for from time to time he scowled unhappily. The Hawk, however, at the moment was engrossed solely with a few curiously assorted letters of the alphabet, which were scrawled across the top of the pad. They ran:

p z u d l k m l q p b.

Beneath this his pencil had already been at work, and he had transformed the line as follows:

ƒ ʒ r a ʔ ʔ ʔ i n ʔ y

He was staring at this result now in a puzzled and bewildered way. Then his pencil picked out the remaining five unscored letters, and mechanically set them down as a third line:

r a i n y.

"Rainy"—there was one word, just one word—"rainy." What did it mean? What was the significance of the word? No message in the Wire Devils' cipher, once the message was decoded, but had

been at once clear and unmistakable in its meaning before. Had they resorted now to *code* words as well, to a cipher within a cipher? Into the grimness of the Hawk's smile there crept a hint of weariness as he slipped the pad into his pocket, allowed the newspaper to drop to his knees, and, edging his chair around, gazed out of the window.

For once his knowledge of their cipher was obviously useless to him, and useless when a foreknowledge of their plans at that moment meant scarcely less than a matter of life and death to him in a very unpleasantly real and literal sense. Not a word had come from them; not a message had gone over the wires on either of the two preceding nights; not a sign of existence had they given since three nights ago when, with an empty safe as the sole reward for their elaborately laid plans, he, the Hawk, had enriched himself with the twenty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds it had once contained. There had been something sinister, something ominous in their silence as compared with the almost insane ravings of MacVigtie, the police, and the press—yes, and the railroad men as well—who were particularly incensed over the murder of the young messenger found dead at his post in the express car with his revolver partially emptied on the floor beside him.

The Hawk drummed abstractedly with his finger tips upon the window-pane. MacVigtie, the police, and the press made no doubt but that he, the Hawk, was the leader of the despera-

does who were terrorizing that particular section of the country. On the other hand, the gang itself had already had occasions enough and in plenty to be painfully aware that he, the Hawk, played always a lone hand—and won! A smile, grim and ironical, parted the firm, set lips. The police and the Wire Devils had a common interest—the Hawk. He was the storm center.

The smile faded, the strong jaws clamped, and the dark eyes narrowed on the flying landscape. It was not the police who concerned him, it was not the impotent frothings of the press; it was the *silence* that the Wire Devils had not broken since that night until they had broken it this morning with the single word that, now that he had deciphered it, still meant nothing to him. A dozen times, stealing their cipher messages, he had turned all their carefully prepared plans to his own account, and snatched away the prize, even as they were in the act of reaching for it. But he was not a fool to close his eyes to the inevitable result. He was pitted against the cleverest brains in the criminal world; all the cunning that they knew would be ruthlessly turned against him, and, already out to “get” him, a price already guaranteed to the lucky member of the band out of the common funds, the empty safe of three nights before, with its jeering ten-dollar counterfeit bill flung in their faces, crowned, he feared, their injuries at his hands, and marked the turning point where they would leave no stone unturned to wreak their vengeance upon him.

And he did not like this silence of theirs since that night. Were they suspicious at last that he had the key to their cipher? He did not think so, and yet he did not know; it was always a possibility. But in any case, wary of any move they might make, he had, as far as it was humanly possible, remained within sound of a telegraph instrument ever since. Last night, for example, taking advantage of some repairs that were being made on the station at Elk Head, fifty miles east of Selkirk, he had lain hidden behind a

mass of building material in the dismantled waiting room within earshot of the telegraph sounder, and there had been nothing.

Forced to retire from here by the advent of the workmen, he had eaten a very leisurely breakfast at the lunch counter—still within earshot of the sounder. He had lingered around the station as long as he had dared without running the risk of exciting suspicion, and then he had taken the local east for Bald Creek, and taken the chance, because he had no choice, that nothing would “break” over the wires during the three-quarters of an hour that he was on the train. The limited scheduled Bald Creek, and that would give him an excuse for remaining there, an innocent and prospective patron of the road, until the limited’s arrival some two hours later. After that, if nothing happened, he had intended to go back on the limited to Selkirk, and get some sleep.

The Hawk yawned heavily. After an almost uninterrupted vigil of forty-eight hours one needed sleep. Well, he was on his way back to Selkirk now—on the limited. Only something *had* happened. Almost at the moment that the limited had pulled into Bald Creek, the Wire Devils had broken their silence, and a cipher message had flashed over the wires. He had waited for it, fought for it, schemed for it, gone without sleep for two days and nights for it—and he had been rewarded. He had intercepted the message, deciphered it; he had got it at last—he had it now! It was the one word—“rainy.” And the word to him meant—nothing!

The Hawk’s fingers ceased their drumming on the windowpane, his head inclined slightly to one side, and he listened. His fellow travelers had evidently scraped up acquaintanceship. The conversation had become general—and suddenly interesting.

“Yes, unquestionably! The amount I have with me is worth quite easily a half million francs—a hundred thousand dollars. It is not my personal property, I regret to say. Quantities

sufficient to be of material service are, for the most part, institutionally held."

The Hawk swung around in his chair, and with frank interest surveyed the little group. He had scanned them once already, critically, comprehensively, at the moment he had first entered the car. The man who sat nearest to him was a doctor from Selkirk, and, it being the ingrained policy of the Hawk to know a reporter as he would know a plain-clothes man, he had recognized one of the others as a young reporter on the staff of the Selkirk *Evening Journal*. The others again, of whom there were three, were strangers to him. His eyes rested, with frank interest, on the man who had just spoken. There had been just a trace of accent in the other's perfect English, and it bore out the man's appearance. The man was perhaps forty-five years of age, rather swarthy in complexion, and, though slight in build, commanding in presence. The black Vandyke beard, as well as the mustache, was carefully trimmed, and his face had an air of the student about it, which was enhanced by the extraordinarily heavy-lensed spectacles which he wore. The excellent clothes were unmistakably of foreign cut.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the reporter. "Is that straight?" He twisted his cigar excitedly from one corner of his mouth to the other. "I say, I don't suppose there's a chance of getting a squint at it, eh?"

"A—squint?" The foreigner's face was politely puzzled.

"I mean a chance to see it—to see what it looks like," interpreted the reporter, with a laugh.

"Oh, yes, of course—a squint. I will remember that." The foreigner joined in the laugh. "One learns, monsieur, always, eh—if one keeps one's ears open!" He reached down and picked up a small black bag from the floor beside his chair. "No, I am afraid I cannot actually show it to you, monsieur, owing to the nature of the container, but perhaps even the manner in which it is carried may be of interest, and, if so, I shall be delighted."

The others, the Hawk among them, leaned spontaneously forward in their chairs. From the bag the man produced a lead box some four inches square. He opened this, and, from where it was nested in wadding, took out what looked like a cylindrical-shaped piece of lead of the thickness and length of one's little finger. He held it out in the palm of his hand for their inspection.

"Inside this sealed lead covering," he explained, "is a glass tube hermetically sealed. The lead, of course, absorbs the rays, which otherwise would render the radium extremely dangerous to handle. You perhaps remember the story; if not, it may possibly be of interest. Radium, you know, was discovered in 1898 by Monsieur and Madame Curie; but the action of radium on human tissues was unknown until 1901, when Professor Becquerel, of Paris, having incautiously carried a tube in his waistcoat pocket, there appeared on the skin within two weeks the severe inflammation which has become known as the famous 'Becquerel burn.' Since that time, I may add, active investigation into the action of radium has been carried on, resulting in the establishment in Paris in 1906 of the Laboratoire Biologique de Radium."

The doctor from Selkirk reached out, and, obtaining a smiling permission, picked up the lead cylinder from the other's hand. The reporter sucked noisily on the butt of his cigar.

"And d'ye mean to say *that's* worth one hundred thousand dollars?" he demanded helplessly.

"Fully," replied the foreigner gravely. "I should consider myself very fortunate if I had the means and the opportunity of purchasing it at that price. There are only a few grains there, it is true, and yet even that is a very appreciable percentage of the world's entire output for a single year. The Austrian government, when it bought the radium-producing pitchblende mines at Joachimsthal, you know, acquired what is practically a world's monopoly of radium. And

since the annual production of ore from those mines is but twenty-two thousand pounds, and from those twenty-two thousand pounds only something like forty-six grains of radium are obtained, it is not difficult to understand the enormous price which it commands."

The little lead cylinder passed from hand to hand. It came last to the Hawk. He examined it with no more and no less interest than had been displayed by the others, and returned it to its owner, who replaced it in the black hand bag.

"Look here," said the reporter impulsively. "I don't want to nose into personal affairs; but, if it's a fair question, what are you going to do with the stuff?"

It was the doctor from Selkirk who spoke before the foreigner had time to reply.

"I was being tempted to ask the same question myself," he said quickly. "I am a physician—Doctor Moreling is my name—and from what you have said I imagine that possibly you are a medical man yourself?"

"And you are quite right," the other answered cordially. "I am Doctor Meunier, and I come from Paris."

"What!" exclaimed the Selkirk physician excitedly. "Not Doctor Meunier, the famous cancer specialist and surgeon of the Salpêtrière Hospital!"

The other shrugged his shoulders protestingly.

"Well," he smiled, a little embarrassed, "my name is certainly Meunier, and it is true that I have the honor to be connected with the institution you have mentioned."

The reporter had a notebook in his hand.

"Gee!" he observed softly. "You don't mind, do you, Doctor Meunier? This looks like luck to me. I'm on the *Evening Journal*—Selkirk."

"Ah—a reporter!" The dark eyes seemed to twinkle humorously from behind the heavy lenses. "I have met some—when I landed in New York. They were very nice. I liked them very much. Certainly, young man, why

should you not say anything, I have told you? You have my permission."

"Fine!" cried the reporter enthusiastically. "And now, Doctor Meunier, if you'll just round out the story by telling us why the celebrated Paris surgeon is traveling in America with a hundred thousand dollars' worth of radium, I'll be glad I got panned on the story I went after this morning and so had to take this train back."

"Panned?" inquired the other gravely.

"Yes." The reporter nodded. "It blew up, you know."

"Blew up! Ah!" The foreigner's face was at once concerned. "So! You were in an accident, then?"

"No, no," laughed the reporter. "There wasn't anything in the story. It didn't have any foundation."

"Again I learn," observed the foreigner, with an amused drawl. He studied the reporter for an instant quizzically. "And so I am to supply the place of the panned story that blew up—is that is? Well, very well! Why not? I see no reason against it, if it will be of service to you. Very well, then. I have been summoned to Japan to attend a case of cancer—radium treatment—and I am on my way there now." He smiled again. "I have noticed that American reporters are observant, and it may occur to you that I might have reached my destination quicker by way of Russia. As a matter of fact, however, I was in New York attending a convention when I received the summons. I cabled for the radium, and—well, young man, that pretty well completes the story."

"Yes—thanks!" said the reporter. He wrote rapidly. "Operation on a Japanese?"

"Why, yes, of course—on a Japanese."

"Summoned," you said. "That listens as though it might be for one of the emperor's family," prodded the reporter shrewdly.

"I did not say so," smiled the other imperturbably. "And even if it were so——" He shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"I get you!" grinned the reporter. "Well, there's no harm in saying a 'high personage' then, is there? That sounds good, and it would have to be some one on the top of the heap to bring a man like you all this way."

"Let us be discreet, young man, and say—well, let us say, a member of a prominent family," suggested the other, still smiling.

"All right," agreed the reporter. "I won't put anything over on you, I promise you. And now, doctor, tell us something more about radium—how it acts and all that, and how an operation is performed with it, and—"

The Hawk had apparently lost interest. He settled back in his chair, and picked up his previously discarded newspaper, yet occasionally his eyes strayed over the top of his newspaper, and rested meditatively on the little black hand bag on the car floor beside the Frenchman's chair. The doctor from Selkirk, the reporter, and the French specialist talked on. The limited reached the last stop before Selkirk. As the train pulled out again, the Hawk, as it were, summed up his thoughts.

"A hundred thousand dollars," confided the Hawk softly to himself. "Maybe it wouldn't be easy to sell, but it would make a very nice haul—a very nice haul. It would tempt—almost anybody. Yes, bad stuff to handle; the fences would be leery probably, because I guess every last grain on this little old globe is catalogued as to ownership, and they'd be afraid it would be an open-and-shut game that what they were trying to shove would be spotted as the stolen stuff—not that it couldn't be done though at that! There's always somebody to take a chance—on a hundred thousand dollars! And what about the institution that owns it coming across big and no questions asked to get it back again? Yes, I guess it would make a nice haul—a very nice haul. I wonder——"

The conductor had entered the car, said something that the Hawk had not caught, and now the French specialist was on his feet.

"How long did you say?" he demanded excitedly.

"I didn't say," replied the conductor; "I only guessed—twelve hours, anyway, and if we're through under twenty-four it'll be because some one has performed a miracle."

"What? Twelve hours—twenty-four!" echoed the Frenchman wildly. "But, *mon Dieu*, I have not that to spare to catch my steamer for Japan in San Francisco!"

"But what's wrong, conductor?" asked the Selkirk doctor. "You haven't told us that."

"The Rainy River Bridge is out," the conductor answered.

The Rainy River Bridge! The Hawk reached into his pocket, withdrew his cigarette case, and made a critical choice of one of the six identical cigarettes the case contained.

"Out! How?" the doctor from Selkirk persisted.

"No details," said the conductor; "except that it was blown up this morning, and that they think it's the work of the Hawk's gang."

"Jumping whiskers!" yelled the reporter. "Is that right, conductor?"

"Yes, I guess it's right fast enough," said the conductor grimly. He turned to the Frenchman. "It's tough luck, sir, to miss transpacific connections, but I guess that's the man you've got to thank for it—the Hawk."

"The Hawk! What is that? Who is the Hawk?" The Frenchman had lost his poise; he was gesticulating violently now.

"I'll tell you," said the reporter briskly. "He's the man that's got your original reign of terror skinned a mile, believe me! He's an ex-Sing Sing convict, and he's the head, brains, and front of a gang of criminals operating out here compared with whom, for pure, first-water deviltry, any one of Satan's picked cohorts would look as shy and retiring as a maiden lady of sixty who suddenly found herself in a one-piece bathing suit—in public. That's the Hawk! Yes, sir—believe me!"

Doctor Meunier waved his hands, as

though to ward off a swarm of buzzing bees.

"I do not understand!" he spluttered angrily. "I do not care to understand! You do not speak English! I understand only of the delay!" He caught at the conductor's sleeve. "You, monsieur—is there not something that can be done?"

"I don't know, sir," said the conductor. "We'll be in Selkirk now in a few minutes, and the best thing you can do is to see Mr. Lanson, the superintendent."

The conductor retired. The Frenchman sat down in his chair, mopped his face with a handkerchief, and stared from one to another of his fellow passengers.

"Messieurs, it is necessary—it is imperative—that I catch the steamer!" he cried frantically. "What am I to do?"

"Lanson's a good head; he'll fix you up some way," said the reporter soothingly. "Don't you worry. I'm mighty sorry for you, Doctor Meunier, upon my soul—but, say, this is *some* story—whale of a climax!"

The Frenchman glared for an instant; then, leaning forward, suddenly shook his fist under the other's nose.

"Young man, damn your story!" he snarled distractedly.

The Hawk retired once more behind his newspaper. The reporter was pacifying the excited Frenchman. The Hawk was not interested in that. The message, that single word which had puzzled him, was transparently clear now—and had been from the moment the conductor had spoken. The surmise of the railroad officials, even if it were no more than surmise on their part, was indubitably correct, barring the slight detail of his own participation in the affair. The Wire Devils had blown up the Rainy River Bridge. This, as a detached fact, did not interest him, either; they were quite capable of blowing up a bridge or anything else. That was a detail. But they were quite incapable of doing it without a very good and sufficient reason, and one that promised returns of a very

material nature to themselves. What was the game? Why the Rainy River Bridge? Why this morning? Why at this time? The Rainy River Bridge was but a few miles west of Selkirk, and—the Hawk's eyes strayed over his newspaper again, and rested mildly upon the Frenchman's little black hand bag, that was quite slim and not overlong, that was of such a size, in fact, that it might readily be concealed, for instance, under one's coat without attracting undue attention—and with the bridge out a passenger, say, on the Coast Limited this noon would experience an annoying, somewhat lengthened but unavoidable interruption in his journey. The passenger might even be forced to spend the night in Selkirk, and very much might happen in a night—in Selkirk! It was a little elaborate—it seemed as though it might perhaps have been accomplished with a little less fuss—though lack of finesse and exceeding cunning was, in his experience, an unmerited reproach where that unknown brain that planned and plotted the Wire Devils' acts was concerned; but, however that might be, the reason that the Rainy River Bridge was out now appeared quite obviously attributable to a very excited foreigner and a little black hand bag whose contents were valued at the modest sum of one hundred thousand dollars.

"I wonder," said the Hawk almost plaintively to himself, "I wonder which of us will cash in on that!"

The Hawk rose leisurely from his chair as the train reached Selkirk. He permitted the Frenchman, the Selkirk physician, and the reporter to descend to the platform in advance of him, but as they hurried through the station and around to the entrance leading upstairs to the divisional offices, obviously with the superintendent's office as their objective, the Hawk, in the privileged character of an interested fellow traveler, had fallen into step with the reporter.

The four entered the superintendent's office, and from an unobtrusive position just inside the door the Hawk listened to the conversation. He heard

Lanson, the superintendent, confirm the conductor's story and express genuine regret at the Frenchman's plight as he admitted it to be a practical certainty that the other would miss his connection in San Francisco. The Frenchman but grew the more excited. He suggested a special train from the western side of the bridge; they could get him across in a boat, he said. The superintendent explained that traffic in the mountains beyond was already demoralized. The Frenchman raved, begged, pleaded, implored, and suddenly the Hawk sucked in his breath softly. The Frenchman was backing his appeal for a special with the offer to pay any sum demanded, and had taken a well-filled pocketbook from his pocket. The Hawk's eyes aimlessly sought the toes of his boots. He had caught a glimpse of a fat wad of bills, a very fat wad, whose denominations were of a large and extremely interesting nature. The official shook his head. It was not a question of money, nor was the other's ability to pay in question. Later on he, Lanson, would know better what the situation was. Meanwhile he suggested that Doctor Meunier should go to the hotel and wait—that there was nothing else to do for the moment. The Selkirk physician here intervened, and, agreeing with the superintendent, offered to escort the Frenchman to the Corona Hotel.

The Hawk, as one whose curiosity was satiated, but satiated at the expense of time he could ill afford, nodded briefly to the reporter, who stood nearest to him, and quietly left the room.

Five minutes later, standing in another room—his own—over the none-too-reputable saloon that made the corner of a lane some two blocks from the station, he was rapidly changing his light-gray suit he had been wearing for one of darker material. From the pockets of the discarded suit he transferred to the pockets of the suit he had just put on an automatic and a bunch of skeleton keys. He opened his trunk, removed the false tray that fitted ingeniously into the curvature of

the lid, and smiled with a sort of grim complacency as he inventoried its contents. There lay the famous diamond necklace, whose theft had been heralded from one end of the country to the other; there the ten thousand dollar's, in neat little packages of bank notes, that he had taken from the paymaster's safe the night the Butcher had nearly shot him; there the contents of one Isaac Kirschell's cash box, some three thousand dollars in bills, gold, and silver; and here—he opened a little box and allowed a stream of gleaming stones to trickle out into the palm of his hand—the twenty thousand dollars' worth of unset diamonds robbed from the fast mail three nights ago.

"Some haul!" observed the Hawk softly. "And with any luck there'll be something else there worth the whole of it put together before the night is over." He replaced the diamonds in the box, the box in the tray, and spoke again, but now his smile was hard and twisted; not an article there but he had scooped from under the noses of the gang. "Yes, I guess I'd go out like you'd snuff a candle if they ever get me, and I guess they're getting—querulous!"

The Hawk, however, had not opened the trunk purely for the opportunity it afforded of inspecting these few mementos, interesting as they might be. It was an excellent safeguard to change his clothes, but it would avail him very little if—well, any one, say—were still permitted to recognize—his face! From the top of the tray, where it lay upon the packages of bank notes, the Hawk picked up a mask and slipped it into his pocket. He fitted the false tray back into the lid of the trunk, closed the trunk, locked it, put on a wide-brimmed, soft felt hat, locked the door of his room behind him, descended the narrow staircase, and stepped out on the street.

His destination was the Corona Hotel, but there was no particular hurry. Undoubtedly from the moment the Frenchman had left the train some, or one, of the gang had fastened on the man's trail; but the companionship

of the Selkirk physician guaranteed the Frenchman's immediate safety. His own plan, as far as it was matured, was very simple. He meant to "spot" if he could, should that particular member, or members, of the gang be unknown to him personally, the man, or men, selected by the Wire Devils to shadow the Frenchman, and then watch the *gang*! The Hawk had no intention whatever of making an attempt on the Frenchman's property with the gang watching *him*; that would have been little less than the act of a fool who was bent on suicide. Since, therefore, he had no choice in the matter, he was quite content to have the gang take the initiatory risk in relieving the Frenchman of the hand bag. After that—the Hawk's old twisted smile was back on his lips as he walked along—after that it became his business to see that the bag did not get very far out of his sight.

He reached and crossed the city park upon which the Corona Hotel fronted, entered the hotel, and, sauntering leisurely through the lobby, approached the desk. He glanced casually over the register; then, lighting a cigar, he selected a chair near the front windows where he could command a general view of the lobby, and sat down.

Doctor Meunier's room was Number 106.

Once the Hawk's eyes lazily surveyed the lobby; thereafter they appeared to be intent on what was passing in the street. He was in luck! The first trick, at least, had gone to him. Lolling in a chair near the elevator doors, and apparently drowsy from a heavy luncheon, was—the Bantam. The Hawk smoked on. Half an hour went by. The Bantam appeared to awaken with a start, smiled sheepishly about him, went over to the news stand, bought a paper, and returned to his seat. The Hawk finished his cigar, rose, strolled to the main entrance, and went out. The Bantam could be safely trusted to see that Doctor Meunier did not vanish into thin air. He would do the like for the Bantam. He crossed over into the park.

The Hawk chose a bench—strategically. Sheltered by a row of trees, he had the corner upon which the hotel was built diagonally before him, and could see both the side entrance on the cross street and the front entrance on the main thoroughfare.

The Hawk's vigil, however, was not immediately rewarded. An hour passed—and yet another—and the greater portion of the afternoon. Five o'clock came. A newsboy passed, crying the *Evening Journal*. The Hawk bought one. A headline in heavy type on the front page instantly caught his eye:

**ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS
IN A LEAD CAPSULE.**

And beneath this, still in assertive type:

**Famous French Surgeon En Route to Japan
with Fortune in Radium Misses Connections
Through Destruction of Railroad Bridge.
Offers Company Large Sum of Money for
Special Train to the Coast.**

"Yes," observed the Hawk caustically, "and even if I hadn't known anything about it before I'd have had a look-in, thanks to this! Sting you, wouldn't it? The papers hand you a come-on, and then they wonder at crime!"

The "story" itself ran a column and a half. The Hawk began to read, or, rather, to divide his attention between the story and the hotel entrances. The reporter had certainly set out with the intention of overlooking no detail that could be turned to account. His meeting and conversation with the Frenchman in the car was breezily set forth; the member of a "prominent family" in Japan artfully disguised, or, perhaps better, disclosed no less august a personage than the emperor himself; the value of radium, both intrinsically and scientifically, was interestingly dealt with, and the surgeon's black hand bag, with its priceless contents, was minutely described and featured.

The Hawk had reached this point when suddenly the newspaper and the reporter's version of the story lost in-

terest for him. Doctor Meunier, gripping his little black hand bag tenaciously, had stepped out through the main entrance of the hotel, and was walking briskly down the street. A moment later, the Bantam sauntered through the doorway and started in the same direction, a hundred yards behind the Frenchman. The Hawk, with a grim smile, folded his paper, stuffed it into his pocket, rose from the bench, crossed the street, and fell into the procession a hundred yards behind the Bantam.

It was still light, though it was beginning to grow dusk—too light for any highway thuggery, and yet—the Hawk gradually closed the gap between himself and the Bantam to half the original distance.

The chase led on for a half dozen blocks, then turned into one of the crowded streets of the shopping district, and proceeded in a downtown direction. And then, abruptly, the Hawk dropped farther behind the Bantam again, and crossed to the opposite sidewalk. It was perhaps only fancy, but intuitively he felt that he, too, in turn, was being followed. His hat brim hiding his face, was pulled a little farther forward over his eyes as he hurried now until he was abreast of the Frenchman. Intuition or not, it was quite possible and even likely that one of the gang might "cover" the Bantam.

The Hawk scowled. He could not be sure, and he dared not put it to more than a casual test, for he could not afford to lose sight of the Bantam. He paused, took a slip of paper from his pocket, and, as though having consulted it for an address, appeared to scan the signs and numbers on the stores in his immediate vicinity. The Frenchman had passed by; the Bantam was directly opposite to him now across the street. The Hawk's keen eyes searched the stream of pedestrians behind the Bantam. And then suddenly he shrugged his shoulders, and returned the paper to his pocket; a man, in a light suit and brown derby hat, had stepped out of the crowd, and was leisurely lighting a cigarette in a door-

way just across from where he, the Hawk, stood.

The Hawk went on, but keeping in the rear of the Bantam now on the opposite side of the street. He was still not sure; but, in any case, neither could the man in the brown derby be *sure* that he, the Hawk, was following the Bantam. So far, then, granted that he *was* being followed, it was an even break.

At the next crossing the Frenchman accosted a policeman, and, as though he had received directions, at once turned down the cross street. The Hawk, as he followed, smiled grimly. The cross street automatically verified the suspicions of the man in the brown derby—if the man in the brown derby had any suspicions to verify; but, at one and the same time, it also answered the Hawk's own question.

The Hawk, in turn, made use of a doorway. He could afford to allow the Bantam temporarily the lead of an extra half block now, for there were fewer people on the cross street, and he would still be able to keep the other in sight. A minute, two, elapsed, and then the Hawk picked up the Bantam's trail again. The man in the brown derby hat had passed by the corner, and continued on along the main street.

And yet still the Hawk was not satisfied. And it was not until after he had repeated the same maneuver some four or five times, as the Frenchman, leading, turned, into different streets, that he was finally convinced that neither the man in the brown derby hat, nor any one else, was interested in his movements.

The chase, since leaving the main street, had wound its way through the less populous wholesale district; it ended at the railway station. The Frenchman passed along the front of the building, and disappeared through the doorway leading upstairs to the divisional offices, his object being, it now appeared obvious, to obtain another interview with the superintendent. The Bantam disappeared inside the main entranceway of the station, evidently to await the Frenchman's

reappearance; the Hawk, on the far side of the street, slipped into the lane that had served him many times as a thoroughfare between the station and his room over the saloon two blocks away.

It was growing dark now. A half hour went by. Still the Hawk crouched in the shadow of the building that bordered the lane. The street lights went on. The six-o'clock whistle blew from the shops over across the tracks. Either the Frenchman was a visitor not easy to get rid of, or Lanson was out and the other was awaiting the superintendent's return. But the Hawk's patience was infinite.

Another fifteen minutes dragged away; then the office door opened, the Frenchman emerged, and started back uptown. The Bantam appeared from the main entranceway, and started after him. The chase was on again. The Hawk followed.

The Frenchman, seemingly sticking to rule of thumb and following the directions he had received on the way down, took exactly the same route on the way back. But now the neighborhood presented an entirely different aspect. The wholesale houses were closed; the streets deserted, dark, and poorly lighted.

The Hawk hugged the shadows of the buildings craftily on the opposite side of the street. Was it coming now? Certainly the gang would go far before finding a more ideal opportunity, and the Bantam, if he had realized the fact, could easily have sent, or telephoned, a message from the station. He, the Hawk, had not cared to take the risk of following the Bantam inside; the Bantam *might* remember having seen him in the hotel lobby.

And then the Hawk's lips thinned. Yes—it was the old, old game! They were on the cross street, a little less than a block distant from the main street ahead. The Bantam began to close up on the Frenchman. The Hawk now, crouching low, slipped almost literally from doorway to doorway. Two men, apparently drunk and quarreling, were coming down the block toward the

Frenchman. The Bantam closed to within a few yards of his quarry. The brawl attained its height as the two men reached the Frenchman. One struck the other. They clinched, and, smashing into the Frenchman, knocked him down. His hat flew in one direction, the hand bag in another. The brawlers, curiously, had forgotten their quarrel, and were lolling a few paces away—within call of the Bantam. The Hawk, squeezed in his doorway directly opposite the scene, kept his eyes on the Bantam. If the play had lacked originality before, it did not lack it now. The Bantam stooped, picked up the hand bag, and, as he stooped again for the hat, slipped the hand bag under his coat, and slipped another bag—evidently a carefully prepared duplicate—out from under his coat and into his hand. The Frenchman was rising dazedly to his feet. The Bantam stepped hurriedly forward, holding out hat and bag.

"I hope you're not hurt, sir," the Hawk heard him say, and then the two moved on together toward the corner.

The Hawk shook his shoulders in a queer, almost self-apologetic sort of way as he followed again. And then he smiled as queerly. The Bantam had the bag now, and if he, the Hawk, had any luck to-night would not be the first time that the Wire Devils had picked the fruit for him to eat.

At the corner, the Bantam shook hands with the Frenchman, and, stepping out into the street, signaled an approaching car. Quick, alert on the instant, the Hawk, safe in the protection of the crowded sidewalk, moved swiftly along in the direction that the car would take, his eyes searching the street on both sides for a taxicab. The street car passed him, but stopped at the next corner, and he caught up with it again. And then, over his shoulder, he saw a taxi coming up behind him. He stepped from the curb, and stopped it.

"Sorry, sir," said the chauffeur. "I'm going after a fare."

"You've got one now—and a good one," said the Hawk quietly. He had

opened the door; a ten-dollar bill lay in the chauffeur's hand.

"Yes, but look here, sir," said the chauffeur a little dubiously, "I'll get into trouble for this, and——"

The Hawk had stepped inside, and lowered the window between himself and the chauffeur.

"Follow that car," said the Hawk pleasantly. "And while we're on the crowded streets don't get so far behind it that you can't close up near enough to see who gets off every time it stops. And don't worry about your trouble; there's another ten coming on top of the regular fare. That's good enough, isn't it?"

"I guess I'm not kicking!" admitted the chauffeur. The taxi started forward. He looked back over his shoulder at the Hawk. "What's the lay? Fly cop?"

"Maybe," said the Hawk. "Mind yourself! It's stopping again. Keep where I can see both sides of the car."

"I get you," said the chauffeur. "Leave it to me."

Block after block was passed, the street car stopping frequently. The Hawk, in the body of the taxi, knelt behind the chauffeur's back, his eyes held steadily on the street car ahead. The Bantam did not alight. The street car began to run out into the suburbs. The taxicab, with lights out now, risking the city ordinance, dropped back to a more respectful distance in the rear. The district became less settled, the houses farther apart; the street lights were single incandescents now, and these few and far between. There was one passenger left in the car—the Bantam.

The chauffeur spoke abruptly.

"We're pretty near the end of the line," he said.

"All right," the Hawk answered. "Stop when the car stops. Keep about this distance; we're not likely to be noticed." A moment later he stepped from the taxi. "Wait for me here!" he directed.

The Bantam, leaving the street car, had started off at a sharp pace past

the end of the car line. It was little more than a country road now; only a house here and there. The Bantam, just discernible in the darkness, had a lead of perhaps a hundred yards, and the Hawk, moving stealthily, began to creep nearer and still nearer, until the hundred yards were fifty; and then suddenly, with a low, muttered exclamation, he threw himself flat on the ground. The Bantam, abreast of a house from which there showed a light in the side window, had turned in abruptly from the road. A glow of light spread out as the front door opened. The Hawk lay motionless. Then the Bantam entered, and the door was closed again. A little later a form appeared at the side window, a hand reached up, and the shade was drawn.

"Nice, respectable neighborhood, too!" observed the Hawk tersely. "Wonder if it's *the* lair, and if the Master Spider's in there now?"

He was creeping forward now across a small lawn. He neared the side window; it was open, and the shade lacked a tiny, though inviting, space of reaching to the sill. A murmur of voices came from within. There was not a sound from the Hawk. And then, from beneath the window, which was low and not more than four feet from the ground, he raised himself up cautiously, and suddenly his dark eyes narrowed. It was not the Master Spider; it was the Butcher, the man whose treachery had nearly done for him that night in the paymaster's office!

He could hear now, and he could see. It was a sitting room such as one might find anywhere in a house whose occupants were in comfortable circumstances. It was cozily and tastefully furnished. It bore no sign of criminal affiliation; it was, as it were, a sort of alibi in itself. A telephone stood on the table beside a pile of magazines, the latter flanked by an ornamental reading lamp; deep, leather lounging chairs added to the inviting and homelike appearance of the room. The incongruity was in the Butcher's thin, hatchetlike face, and in the coarse, vicious features of the short, stocky

Bantam, as they faced each other across the table.

"Where's the others, d'ye say?" demanded the Bantam.

"Out," said the Butcher. "The chief called 'em an hour ago. I don't know what's up. I guess you and I keep house here to-night; he said you were to stay. Mouser and Jack were to report at Kirschell's, weren't they?"

"Yes, that's what they said."

"Well, all right." The Butcher shrugged his shoulders. "That's none of our hunt. I suppose you got it, didn't you—or you wouldn't be here?"

"Sure I got it!" answered the Bantam. "What d'ye think?"

"Let's have a look," said the Butcher eagerly. "The chief says we can cash in on it for fifty thousand."

"Fifty thousand!" the Bantam growled as he unbuttoned his coat, and, taking out the bag, laid it on the table. "I thought it was worth a hundred thousand!"

"So it is." The Butcher was opening the bag. "But it's no cinch to turn it into money without a big split—savvy?"

The Butcher opened the lead box, took out the lead cylinder, and balanced it speculatively in the palm of his hand.

The Bantam regarded it distrustfully.

"It don't look like fifty cents to me!" he commented finally.

"I know," said the Butcher facetiously; "but your eyesight's bum, Bantam. Have any trouble?"

The Bantam grinned.

"Not what you'd notice. After the Mouser and Jack smashed into him, the poor old boob didn't know what had happened till I was handin' him his hat and the other bag. I guess he bumped his bean kind of hard on the sidewalk."

The Butcher nodded approvingly. He was still twisting the lead cylinder around and around in his hand.

"Say," suggested the Bantam impatiently after a moment, "when you've done chuckin' it under the chin put it to bed somewhere, and if there's any

grub in the house lead me to it. I'm hungry!"

"All right," agreed the Butcher. He replaced the lead cylinder in its box, and the box in the bag, crossed the room, opened a little cupboard in the wall opposite the window, laid the bag inside, and closed the cupboard door again. "Come on!" he said.

The two men left the room. The Hawk did not move. He was fingering in a curiously absent sort of way the edges of the newspaper that still protruded from his pocket. It was very simple, very easy. The window was open, the cupboard was not locked, the room was empty, there were only the Bantam and the Butcher, and they were in another part of the house; he had only to lift aside the window shade, step in, steal across the room, and steal out again—with a hundred-thousand-dollar prize. It was very inviting. It seemed suddenly as though it were an invitation to enter that room—and *never leave it alive!*

Flashing quick through the Hawk's brain now was a résumé of the afternoon, of each separate and individual occurrence since he had left the train. Had he, after all, been followed? If so—how? Had the Bantam been warned? He shook his head, as though impatient with himself. Even apart from that, what he had begun to suspect now would be thoroughly logical on the part of the gang. The newspaper supplied the key. He would unquestionably have seen the newspaper that afternoon, and he would, apart from being spared several aimless hours in the park, have done exactly as he had done, and just as unquestionably be where he was now at this precise moment even if he had not been with the Frenchman on the train. The newspaper placed him in possession of the same facts that the Wire Devils possessed. They must know that. They were therefore justified in assuming that he, quite as rabidly as themselves, would make an attempt to steal the bag. They knew, in that case, that he would have discovered that they were already at work, and they knew that,

on a dozen occasions before, that had not prevented him from snatching the prize they had already counted within their grasp. Were they on their guard now—or a little more than on their guard? Were they offering him, on the chance or with the knowledge that he was here now, the opportunity to snatch another prize—and seeing to it that it was for the *last* time?

The Hawk edged back from the window, and, silent as a shadow now, began to circuit the house. And then suddenly his suspicion became a certainty. It was only a little thing—a slip—but it was enough. The Butcher had made a misplay! There was no light in any other window, and a man did not usually eat in the dark. It was fairly, even painfully, evident now that the Bantam and the Butcher were in, say, the adjoining room, waiting for him to enter through that window into their trap.

But there was still the little black bag—and one hundred thousand dollars! The Hawk's smile was more ominous than pleasant. There were other ways apart from a window, and even two men, especially if they were caught by surprise, had been known to be quite amenable to the influence of a revolver muzzle.

The Hawk found the back-door entrance, found it locked, and used a skeleton key. He was perhaps five minutes in opening the door, but in those five minutes there was no click of lock as the handle turned by infinitesimal fractions of an inch, no creak of hinge as the door little by little swung back and was closed again.

The silence was almost uncanny. It was utter blackness. By feeling out with his hand he discovered he was in a passageway. He moved along, guiding himself by the sense of touch against the wall, his weight balanced and full upon one foot before he lifted the other for the next step.

It seemed a passage of interminable length, that led on and on through blackness and silence. In reality he had come possibly thirty feet, and had passed one door. And then he began

to catch the sound of voices whispering. The whisperings grew more distinct, and became low, guarded tones as he moved forward, and now he could distinguish words. He flattened back against the side of the passage. Opposite to him was an open door, and within the room, instead of blackness now, was a sort of murky gloom which was created by a ray of light that seeped in through a partially open door at the far side of the room. The Hawk's fingers slipped into his pocket and slipped his mask over his face. He had his bearings now. The room from which the light came was the baited trap; the room immediately in front of him was the room from which the trap was to be sprung. His hand went to his pocket again, and came out with his automatic. It was their move now. If, when they finally grew impatient, they went back into the lighted room or turned on the light in the room where they were now waiting, they sprang the trap upon themselves.

Came the Bantam's low growl and the twitching of the Hawk's jaw muscles.

"I don't like it, I tell you! Where is he? What's he waiting for? I know he followed me. You saw him yourself from the front room, creeping across the lawn out there. 'Twouldn't take him all this time to get in through that window."

"Aw, shut up!" snarled the Butcher. "You'd give any one the creeps!"

"That's all right," whispered the Bantam hoarsely, "but it was a fool game not to cover him close on the way back——"

"Yes—and scare him off!" sneered the Butcher. "There ain't but one guy that'd pick up that trail, and that's the Hawk. He's butted in enough, but he's butted in for the last time to-night! The two of us are aplenty, aren't we? Sure—cover him close on the way back—and scare him off! D'ye think he's a fool!"

"No, I don't, curse him!" retorted the Bantam. "And if I'd had my way, I'd have croaked him in broad daylight with a bullet through his bean and fin-

ished him for keeps the minute Jack spotted him following me. Instead of that, Jack never even gets a look at his mug."

"You're some bright guy!" grunted the Butcher. "We'd have had a hot chance making a dead man tell us where he'd planted those diamonds off the fast mail, not to speak of a few other little trifles the swine did us out of."

"And you think——"

"You bet I do!" the Butcher cut in viciously. "He'll talk to-night to save his life, and then I'll toss you, Bantam, if you like, to see who bumps him off."

The Hawk's fingers played in a curious, caressing motion over the stock of the automatic in his hand; the twist of his lips grew a little harder, a little more merciless.

There was movement in the room now. One of the two—the Bantam undoubtedly—in growing uneasiness was moving softly, erratically, up and down the room. It proved to be the Bantam.

"Well, then, where the devil is he?" he burst out nervously.

"Aw, shut up!" snarled the Butcher savagely for the second time.

The Bantam's shadow, as the man paced silently up and down, passed the doorway, repassed, and passed again.

"I tell you, I don't like it!" he flung out suddenly. "Something's wrong! If he's outside the house, he can't see, anyway. 'I'm going to take a chance, and——'"

There was a click, the light in the passageway went on; then a yell from the Bantam in the doorway, a lightning spring from the Hawk as the other jerked a weapon upward, and the Bantam went down in a heap, as the Hawk's pistol caught him on the head. It was quick, like the winking of an eye. From back in the room the Butcher sprang forward for the doorway and fired and missed, and the Hawk's left hand, as they came upon each other, darting out, closed with the strength of a steel vise on the Butcher's right wrist, and with a terrific wrench twisted the other's arm halfway around. It was lighter now in the room—light

enough to see. The two forms swayed strangely—a little apart—the Butcher's body bent over as though queerly deformed. Slowly, remorselessly, the Hawk turned the arm in its socket. Sweat sprang to the Butcher's forehead, his face writhed with pain, and, with a scream of agony, the revolver clattered to the floor.

"You're breaking it; for God's sake let go!" he moaned.

The Hawk kicked the revolver to the other side of the room.

"Take the Bantam by the shoulders and drag him into that lighted room!" The Hawk's tones were flat, unpleasant. "I don't think I hit him hard enough to leave him there alone."

The Butcher obeyed, with the muzzle of the Hawk's automatic pressed persuasively to the small of his back. He left the Bantam in the middle of the sitting-room floor, and himself accepted a chair—at the Hawk's invitation.

"You again, eh, Butcher?" The Hawk's voice had become a drawl. With his automatic covering the Butcher, he had backed to the cupboard, opened it, and was feeling inside with his left hand. "My grateful thanks, and you'll convey my compliments—the Hawk's, you know—to my friend, the chief." He had slipped the little black bag under his coat, and now his hand was back in the cupboard again; he had felt a ball of heavy cord there. "Sorry I haven't a phony ten-spot with me—my card, you know—unpardonable breach of etiquette—really!" He smiled suddenly. The ball of cord was in his hand as he advanced toward the Butcher's chair.

The Butcher seemed to have lost all his characteristic ferocity; the sharp little ferret eyes rested anywhere but on the Hawk, and on his face was a sickly grin.

"Stand up!" commanded the Hawk curtly; he was knotting the end of the cord into a noose. "Now—your hands behind your back—and together! Thank you!" He slipped the noose over the Butcher's hands, and began

to wind the cord around the other's wrists.

The Butcher winced.

"I'm sorry," said the Hawk apologetically; "but it's all I have. The cord is rather thin, and I'm afraid it may cut into you; not strong enough to allow you any play, you know. And, by the way, Butcher, I heard the Bantam say that I was spotted on the way down; I presume he meant on the way down to the station. I'll be honest and admit I'm disappointed in myself. Would you mind explaining, Butcher; I was quite convinced there was no one behind me."

"There wasn't!" The Butcher risked a sneer. "Mabbe the French guy was heard telephoning to the station, and the Bantam passed on the word. Nobody had to follow behind. All there was to do, knowing where the Frenchy was going, was to dodge around the blocks ahead and keep hidden down the intersecting street and see if the same guy kept going by the corners after the Bantam."

"Thank you, Butcher," murmured the Hawk gratefully. "That lets me out a little, doesn't it?" He wound the cord again and again around the Butcher's wrists, knotted it, shoved the other unceremoniously back into the chair, and tied the Butcher's legs.

The Hawk then gave his attention to the Bantam. The Bantam was just beginning to regain consciousness. The Hawk knelt down, rolled the man over on his side, and secured him in the same manner as he had the Butcher. But with the Bantam he went a little farther; he transferred the Bantam's handkerchief from the Bantam's pocket to the Bantam's mouth, and tied it there.

He turned once more to the Butcher.

"I must apologize again," he said softly. "I hate to do this"—he felt for, and obtained, the Butcher's handkerchief—"but the house is unfortunately close to the road and you might inadvertently make yourself heard before I got decently away."

The Butcher's reply was a shrug of the shoulders.

The Hawk, about to cram the handkerchief into the other's mouth, paused.

"Butcher," said the Hawk almost plaintively, "if you'll permit me to deal in mixed metaphors, you appear to have shed your spots; you're too darned docile!"

"You got the goods," muttered the Butcher sullenly. "What more do you —"

He stopped suddenly. His eyes met the Hawk's. The telephone on the table was ringing.

The Hawk hesitated. Into the Butcher's eyes, narrowed now, there seemed to have come a mocking gleam. The telephone rang again. And then the Hawk reached out abruptly and took the receiver from the hook.

"Hello!" he said gruffly.

"Four X. Who's that?" responded a voice.

There was something familiar about the voice, but he could not on the instant place it. The Hawk's mind, even as he answered, was swiftly cataloguing every member of the gang known to him in an effort to identify it.

"The Bantam," he said.

"All right," replied the voice. "Give me the Butcher."

"Hold the line," answered the Hawk.

He placed his hand over the transmitter. The voice was still eluding him. He turned and eyed the Butcher.

"Four X wants you, Butcher." All the drawl, all the insouciance was gone now; his voice was hard with menace, cold as death. "And you're going to speak to him, but you're going to say what I tell you to say. But before you begin I want you to remember that little account between us that's been hanging over since the night in the paymaster's office. If you make a break, if you try to frame me, I'll settle that account here to-night while you sit in that chair. If you hesitate on a word, I'll fire, and not through my pocket, you yellow cur! Understand? Don't kid yourself on this, Butcher! If I nod my head, say 'yes,' and no more. Now!"

The Butcher had sunk back in his

chair. There was fear in his face; it was white, and he circled his lips with his tongue.

Beneath the mask, the Hawk's lips were a straight line. He laid down his automatic on the table, placed the receiver to his own ear, and held the transmitter to the Butcher's lips.

"Go ahead!" ordered the Hawk. "Ask him what he wants." His fingers, cupped and pressed over the transmitter, lifted.

"Hello!" said the Butcher. "What is it?"

"That you, Butcher? Everything all right?" inquired the voice.

The Hawk nodded.

"Yes," said the Butcher.

"Well, open up a bit!" complained the voice. "Did you get him, and —"

The voice was speaking on. The Hawk's lips had set a little tighter. He had recognized the voice now. His fingers were pressed over the transmitter again.

"Tell him you laid me out cold," instructed the Hawk, "and that I haven't regained consciousness yet. Now!" The voice had ceased speaking; the Hawk's fingers lifted again.

"We beaned him," said the Butcher morosely. "He's still asleep."

"Good!" chuckled the voice. "I'll be up there by and by, so——"

"Tell him to stay where he is, that it will be—*safer*." The Hawk clipped off his words.

The Butcher delivered the message, the snarl in his voice entirely to the Hawk's liking.

"What?" questioned the voice. "I didn't get you."

"Repeat!" whispered the Hawk.

The Butcher repeated.

"O. K.," came back the answer.

"Yes, I guess you're right. So long, Butcher."

"Say 'good night,'" prompted the Hawk.

"Night!" growled the Butcher.

The Hawk replaced the receiver on the hook, and the instrument on the table.

The Butcher swore. His lips were livid.

The Hawk picked up his automatic and leaned forward, his eyes on a level with the Butcher's.

"What's that fellow's moniker, Butcher?"

The Butcher hesitated.

The automatic crept forward an inch.

"Parson Joe." The Butcher's voice choked with mingled rage and fear.

"Parson Joe, eh?" repeated the Hawk ruminatingly. "Was he the chap who pulled that con game on the Riverdale Bank back in New York State about six years ago, and afterward got cornered by the police in Ike Morrissey's gambling hell, and was caught because he nearly bled to death, with his wrist half off, trying to get through a broken windowpane? He got four spaces. That him?"

"If you say so, it must have been."

There was a leer in the Butcher's voice.

"Was it?" The automatic touched the Butcher's breast.

"Yes," said the Butcher.

"Thank you," smiled the Hawk.

"Now——" He gagged the Butcher with the handkerchief, tied it securely into place, stood up, switched off the electric reading lamp, moved to the window, and drew aside the shade. "We'll let that account stand open for a little while longer, Butcher," he said softly. "Just a little while longer. Good night!"

He swung out of the window, dropped to the ground, ran across the lawn, and gained the road. His mask and automatic were back in his pockets. His fingers felt and patted the little black bag under his coat.

"Always play your luck," whispered the Hawk confidentially to himself. "It seems to me I saw a little loose change in Doctor Meunier's pocketbook, and I don't think he's opened the duplicate bag yet and stirred up a fuss. It isn't much compared with a hundred thousand, or even fifty, to quote the Butcher, but 'every little bit added to what you've got——'" He fell to whistling the tune pleasantly under his breath as he hurried along the road.

A minute later he had regained the taxicab.

"Drop me a block this side of the Corona, and give her all she's got!" he directed crisply.

"D'ye get him?" demanded the chauffeur eagerly.

"My friend," replied the Hawk gently as he stepped into the taxi, "if you'll think it over, you'll come to the conclusion that you really don't want to know. Take it from me that the less you're wise about to-night the wiser you will be to-morrow. Now cut her loose!"

It had taken a good thirty minutes on the trip up; it took less than half of that, by a more direct route, for the return journey. At the corner, a block from the hotel, the Hawk crumpled two generous bank notes into the chauffeur's hand, and bade the man good night. He traversed the block, entered the hotel lobby, and, ignoring the elevators, leisurely and nonchalantly ascended the staircase to the first floor. From the landing he noted the room numbers opposite to him, and with these as a guide passed on along the corridor to where it turned at right angles at the corner of the building, and halted before room No. 106. A light showing above the transom indicated that the Frenchman was within. He had passed one or two people. No one had paid any attention to him. Why should they? He glanced up and down. The corridor, for the moment, was empty. He tried the door cautiously; it was locked. His right hand in his side pocket closed over his automatic. He pressed close to the door, knocked gently with his left hand, and with his left hand reached quickly into his pocket for his mask.

"Who's there?" the Frenchman called out.

"Message for you, sir," the Hawk answered.

Footsteps crossed the room, the key turned in the lock, and, in a flash, the Hawk, slipping on his mask, had pushed the door open, closed it behind him, and the Frenchman was staring into the muzzle of the automatic.

"*Mon Dieu!*" gasped the Frenchman faintly.

"That's right," said the Hawk coolly. "Don't speak any louder than that, or——" He shrugged his shoulders significantly as he locked the door.

The Frenchman, white-faced, was evidently fighting for his nerve.

"What—what is it?" he stammered.

"What is it that you want?"

It was almost a reassuring smile that flickered on the Hawk's lips, and his voice did not belie it; it was purely conversational in its tones.

"I was reading in the paper this afternoon about the famous Doctor Meunier. I'm a bit of a scientist myself, in an amateur way, and I'm particularly interested in radium when there's enough of it to——"

"Ah! My radium! That is what you want!" cried out the Frenchman wildly. The duplicate bag lay on the bed. He ran for it, and snatched it up. "No! That you shall not have! You come to steal my radium, you——"

"You jump at conclusions, doctor," said the Hawk patiently. "Since it is already stolen, I——"

"Stolen!" The Frenchman stared, and then, with feverish fingers, opened the bag. He looked inside. The bag dropped to the floor, his hands went up in the air. "It is empty—empty!" he cried distractedly. "It is gone—gone! *Mon Dieu*, my radium is gone! What shall I do?" His hands were rumpling through his hair like one demented. "What shall I do? It is gone!"

"Well," suggested the Hawk suavely, "I thought perhaps you might like to buy it back again."

"Buy it back! Are you crazy? Am I crazy?" The man appeared to be beside himself; he flung out his arms in mad gesticulation. "With what would I buy it back? It is worth a hundred thousand dollars—a half million francs!"

"You are excited, Doctor Meunier," said the Hawk calmly. From where it bulged under his coat he drew out the black bag. "I said nothing about a hundred thousand dollars."

The Frenchman reached out a shaking hand, pointing at the bag.

"It is you, then, after all, who stole it, eh? The bags—they are identical! *Mon Dieu*, what does this mean? I am mad! I do not understand!"

There was a chair on each side of the small table near the bed.

"Sit down," invited the Hawk, indicating one with his revolver muzzle. The Frenchman sat down with a helpless and abandoned gesture of despair. The Hawk took the other chair. He opened the bag, opened the lead box, and laid the lead capsule on the table. "Do you identify this?" he inquired pleasantly.

The Frenchman reached for it eagerly.

The Hawk drew it back.

"One moment, please, Doctor Meunier!" he murmured. "You recognize it? You are satisfied that it is your tube of radium?"

"Yes, yes—*mon Dieu*! But, yes!"

"And it is worth, you say, a hundred thousand dollars?"

"But, yes, I tell you!" cried the Frenchman. "A hundred thousand; certainly it is worth that!"

"Quite so!" said the Hawk placidly. "Therefore, Doctor Meunier, a comparatively small sum, eh?—you would be willing to pay that—a sum, I might add, that would be quite within your means."

"Quite within my means?" repeated the Frenchman a little dazedly.

"Yes," said the Hawk sweetly. "And to be specific, let us say—whatever is in your pocketbook."

The Frenchman drew back in his chair. His face blanched.

"You—you mean to rob me!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"I do not see it quite in that light." The Hawk's voice was pained. "But we will not discuss the ethics involved; we probably should not agree. I did not steal it from you, and I am returning it, not, I might say, without having incurred considerable personal risk in so doing. Perhaps we might better agree if we called it—a reward."

"No!" said the Frenchman desperately.

The Hawk's revolver tapped the table top with a hint of petulance.

"And—and what guarantee have I," the Frenchman burst out, "that you will give me the tube after you have taken my money?"

"My word," said the Hawk evenly. "And—I am waiting, Doctor Meunier!"

The Frenchman hesitated; then, with an oath, flung his pocketbook upon the table. The Hawk opened it, extracted the wad of bills that he had seen exhibited in the superintendent's office, smiled as he fingered them, and put them in his pocket. He pushed the lead capsule across the table, and suddenly, as the other reached for it, the Hawk was on his feet, his automatic flung forward, his left hand grasping the other's sleeve.

They held that way for an instant, eying each other, the Hawk's left hand slowly pushing back the other's right-hand sleeve. And then the Hawk's eyes shifted to a long, jagged, white scar on the bare forearm just above the wrist.

"Shall I introduce myself—Parson Joe?" purred the Hawk.

The other's face was a mottled red; it deepened to purple. He cursed between his teeth. "I know you, but I didn't think you knew me. So you called the turn when the Bantam followed me, eh?"

The Hawk shook his head.

"I never saw you in my life before to-day," he said grimly, "and, if it will do you any good to know it, I fell for that radium plant—until you telephoned the Butcher half an hour ago."

"And how did you know me, then?" The other flung the question fiercely.

Again the Hawk shook his head. He had no desire that Parson Joe should know he had been on the limited that morning—Parson Joe might possess an inconveniently retentive memory for faces, and he, the Hawk, did not always wear a mask.

"Maybe I guessed it, Parson," he said insolently. "I must have; it was the only thing that wasn't in the paper. What encyclopedia did you get that 'Becquerel burn' dope out of? And

was the reporter lying, or how did you work it to get him on the train?"

Parson Joe was leaning forward over the table, fingering the lead capsule. He suddenly crushed it with a blow of his fist, twisted it in two, and hurled the pieces across the floor.

"We got him up the line on a fake that didn't come off," he snarled.

There was an instant's silence; then the Hawk spoke.

"Nice, amiable crowd you are, Parson!" The Hawk's voice was silken. "I'm just beginning to appreciate you. Let's see! You had to pull a story that any newspaper would jump at and *feature*, didn't you? And you had to have a big enough bait to make sure I'd rise to it. And you had to account for the celebrated Doctor Meunier's lay-over in Selkirk, and, not expecting I'd pick up the trail quite so quickly, say, not until after the paper had been out a little longer and you had made another baiting trip or two to Lanson's office, you had to account for the famous gentleman's enforced stay through the night, if necessary, and it gave a big swing to the story and let you work your stunt for the special train that you knew you couldn't get, and you figured I'd be even more sure to see it in the paper if it was connected with some pleasant little episode of yours—and so you blew up the bridge."

The man's teeth were clamped together.

"Yes, blast you!" he choked. "And we'd blow a dozen more to get you!"

"You flatter me!" said the Hawk dryly. "I'm afraid I've put you to quite a little trouble—for nothing!"

Sullen, red, furious, Parson Joe's face twitched.

"You win to-night"—the heavy-lensed spectacles were off, and the black eyes, the pupils gone, burned on the

Hawk—"but you're going out! As sure as God gave you breath, we'll get you yet, and——"

"The Butcher told me that, and so did the Cricket—some time ago," said the Hawk wearily. "I'm—*keep your hands above the table*—I'm sure you mean well!" He was backing toward the door. "I won't bother to relieve you of your revolver, and I don't think you'll telephone down to the office; it might be awkward explaining to the police how Doctor Meunier lost his pocketbook and got his medical degree. I shall, however, lock the door on the outside, as I shall require a minute or two to reach the street, and I cannot very well go through the hotel corridor with—this." He jerked his hand toward his mask.

The other's hands were above the table, obediently in plain view, but they were clenching and unclenching now, the knuckles white.

The Hawk reached behind him, took the key from the lock, listened, opened the door slightly, and, still facing into the room, still covering the other with his automatic, reached around the door and fitted the key into the outside of the lock.

"When you get out," said the Hawk, as though it were an afterthought, "I'm sure the Butcher will be glad to see you; I am afraid he is not as comfortable as he might be."

The black eyes, with a devil's fury in them, had never left the Hawk's. And now the other lifted one of his clenched hands above his head.

"I'd give five years—*five years* of my life—for a look at your face!" he whispered hoarsely.

The Hawk was backing through the door.

"Maybe," he said softly, "maybe some day you will."

The fifth story in this series—entitled "An Even Break"—will appear in the May 20th POPULAR.

Private Bentley: Deserter

AN INCIDENT OF DECORATION DAY

By Ladd Plumley

Author of "Tammany and the Kaiser," Etc.

HOPE the boys won't be late!" exclaimed Doctor Bentley, flicking his whip across the back of his horse.

The doctor had been up all night with a farmer's child, whom he had just managed to save in an attack of croup. He had eaten a hasty breakfast, and had slipped into his faded suit of blue.

The morning was a hot one for the thirtieth of May, and the doctor pulled up old Hattie, his mare, under a tree and let the horse rest while he mused for a few moments.

"Let's see," he said. "Hiram Messenger went off in that attack of pneumonia last spring. Don't see how I could have managed better. Terrible, though! Folks can't know how a doctor feels. Then, after Messenger died, Nathaniel Bulkley's folks moved to Pennsylvania. When you come to think of it, old men are like babies. If their folks move away, they has to git up and git, bag and baggage. Sho!" he exclaimed, pulling off his slouch hat and wiping his bald head with his handkerchief. "Counting out Hiram and Nathaniel, there ain't but three others. Sho! A procession of four old baldheads! But even then I wouldn't miss it for a farm! It yanks an old fellow back through fifty years. Pulls on his heart, but warms it, though."

Folks respected and loved Doctor Bentley, or "old Doc Bent," as they called him, but they never thought of him as a soldier. His wife had been dead for many years, and a niece, a woman of middle age, lived with him

and bossed him as much as anybody ever bosses a country doctor. For months he had been looking forward toward Decoration Day. And for weeks he had hardly thought of anything else.

He yanked on the reins, and the mare once more began her plodding toward the village.

As the doctor came around a bend of the road he could see a group of women and children waiting in the yard of the schoolhouse. But, strain his eyes as he did, nowhere could he see a suit of blue. He gazed down the road, but failed to catch a glimpse of his cronies.

"They must be awful late!" he exclaimed. "It's the first time. Last year there was five, waving a flag as if they'd rip her apart."

As the mare jogged into the schoolyard, a little girl ran to the side of the buggy.

"Good morning, doctor!" she called out. "Mother told me to tell you that grandfather's got an awful cold. She wants you to come up after the graves are decorated."

"Pesky colds!" exclaimed the doctor. "If folks can't get anything else, they always have colds! That's another of the fellows out!"

The doctor drove under the shed at the back of the schoolhouse, where he hitched the mare. Then he pulled off his spectacles and wiped them. He generally took things philosophically, but this morning he could not.

There were still two others, and Josiah, with his jokes, always livened things up. He and Simmons were late, but of course they would come. He

hastened to the front of the yard, and pushed into the group before the schoolhouse.

"Guess there won't be any procession," remarked Mattie Underwood.

"Don't say a thing like that!" irritably exclaimed the doctor.

"Didn't Emma tell you about her grandfather?" asked Mattie.

"But there's Josiah Hempburn and Abe Simmons!"

"Mr. Hempburn slipped at the spring house yesterday and sprained his knee. John came over to tell us. He wants you to come and see Mr. Hempburn."

"There's Abe Simmons," said the doctor. "He hasn't missed a procession in ten years. Don't tell me something's happened to him!"

"His folks took him to Boston," said Mattie. "I was at the depot. He wanted somebody to tell you how awful sorry he was."

The doctor turned his back, and gazed up the road. Then he took out his handkerchief and blew his nose as if it were a powerful but sorrowful trumpet. Suddenly he squared himself around to the group.

"Since the death of Captain Blakely I've been the only one left of Company A; the others were even from different regiments. I'm going to march."

"You can't have a procession with only old Doc Bent!" indignantly exclaimed a small boy.

"Company A is going to march," said the doctor. "I rather think that Company A hasn't looked forward to this procession for nothing. Company A is certainly going to march!"

And Company A did march. At first the boys shouted in derision and said that they would not follow in the procession. In their hearts they had always looked upon the old doctor as a pretender and not a soldier at all. There had always been a story abroad which rather besmirched the record of the veteran. Little Susie Millbank threw down her wreath of roses, and protested with tears that, "It was the very foolishest thing!" Then the minister of the Methodist church, the only man present except the doctor, exerted

his authority. In the end the procession got under way.

In the van, and carrying the school flag, marched the doctor. He did his best to appear soldierlike, but found it hard work. Two soldiers seemed to him the minimum number which could make a martial appearance.

But as he trudged onward he forgot that he was alone, and presently his mind held nothing but the remembrance of a September morning in the year 1862. The details of that morning came out with as startling clearness as the details of a good photograph. All the way from the crossroads to the hill below the church, the objective point of the procession, shadows of long ago peopled the broad meadows and made a battle ground of as peaceful a scene as can be imagined. The very laughter of the children recalled to him the raucous battle yells of that September morning which had been replied to by the ringing shouts during the advance of Company A.

As they came near the hill that was crowned by the church, the highway crossed a bridge over a little brook. Beyond lay fields where a flock of sheep were feeding. But the doctor did not see lambs and sheep. The remembrance of smoking cannon beyond that other bridge brought his bent figure almost erect. He gripped the flagstaff, and, with his eyes fixed before him, marched grimly across, the minister falling to the rear, and the children, not knowing why, silencing their laughter.

But after climbing the hill the doctor came out of the past, and found the present rather dreary.

"Seems as if it was an awful hot day," he remarked to the minister as they seated themselves on the steps of the church. "And what a strange world! Those kids that have gone to decorate the graves! War, battles, and little girls decorating graves on a May morning! Say, dominie, the thing don't hang together. It isn't natural. Anyhow, we ought to have something military."

The doctor had leaned the flag

against the side of the church, where the colors drooped in lifeless folds.

"Everett, that flag looks as inspiring and military as my old, moth-eaten suit. I'm going to get out of this. I don't feel as if I had any part in it. I ought to be dead by rights, and little Susie should be hanging her wreath on my grave stone. I'll go back and get Harriet and make some calls."

"Wait a moment, doctor," said Mr. Everett. "I'll gather the children together and let you tell them how frightened you were before the great battle of Antietam."

"I'll tell it, of course. I've told it many times, but you can't blame me for not caring to go on repeating it forever."

Presently the children gathered in a group before the porch of the church, with their mothers and their elder sisters, who had accompanied them.

"It isn't much that I have to tell, folks," said the doctor in his soft little voice. He rested his weight on the staff of the flag, the drooping folds falling to the bottom of his coat. "And when President Lincoln called for volunteers I was really just a boy. Those were stirring times—stirring times! Papers chock-full of war news; patriotic meetings every evening in all the lodge rooms and churches; women and even little girls—like Susie there—picking lint and making bandages. Yes, children, those were stirring times!"

For a few moments the doctor forgot to go on. He gazed before him toward the blue hills beyond the valley below the church. Again the ghosts of that September morning were all about him. Mr. Everett's voice recalled him to the present.

"Tell them how frightened you were before that big battle," the minister reminded.

"That's so, children," the soft voice continued. "You see, it isn't anything to be proud of—but it has its lesson. And the night before the battle I got so scared that I couldn't sleep one little wink. I'm ashamed to tell you boys about it, but I got so scared that I threw off my blanket and sneaked out

into the blackness. If I could only get away—anywhere! For, you see, I was that miserable wretch, a deserter. Then I was so ashamed of myself that I dropped on my knees there in the bushes and prayed God to save me from such a disgrace. And I crawled back to the encampment and cowered under my blanket until dawn. But they had wanted me for sentry duty, and they confused me with another whom they took in my place. Boys, may you be preserved from such a thing as that!" The trembling voice ceased, and the white, wrinkled face had taken on lines that sobered the children.

"And tell them how the feeling passed away before you fought in the battle," suggested the minister.

"Yes," said the doctor. "That's how it was. The next day the feeling had passed all away. And that makes a good lesson for all of you not to let fear be the master. Yes, boys, it's a good lesson, and I hope you will remember it."

Beyond the treetops against the hills came out a misty picture. A road of rutted soil ran down through a grove of ragged pines to a narrow bridge over a deep stream. Figures in gray lay like dead men in the glades between the bushes beyond the bridge. Suddenly jets of red flame ran all along the gray line. And for a moment the picture showed only the low railings of the bridge and a smoky obscurity beyond. Then—how that slim young fellow in blue, waving a flag, sprang forward through the whitish clouds! Crash on crash in volleys from muskets rang out, and the bursting roar of cannon made the air shake. And—then—again came the vision of a slender figure waving the torn flag over his head and standing beyond the bridge amid shattered gun carriages, dying men, and corpses. And across the bridge surged rank after rank of blue.

"As I said," faltered the doctor, his hands twitching on the staff of the flag, "it's a lesson to all of you." He turned toward the minister, and asked hungrily: "Can't they sing something? The 'Star-Spangled Banner' or 'John

Brown's Body?" And how I wish somebody had a drum!"

"There's a drum now!" shouted a small boy.

The doctor listened intently, turning his best ear in the direction the boy pointed. Far away, toward the railroad station, from amid the trees in the valley, came the faint, recurring throb of a drum, and in the breeze which had begun to sway the branches trembled the high notes of a fife.

Before so listless, the children began to move briskly back and forth, the boys stamping in time with the distant throb, and the girls humming the refrain of the fife. The doctor threw back his shoulders, and pushed the staff of the flag upright, and an increase in the wind swung out the folds, the old man coming erect, with heels together.

"It really sounds as if they were coming here!" exclaimed the doctor. The minister smiled as if he knew something of the distant music.

Louder and louder came the dub-a-dub-dub of the drum and the shrill notes of "Marching Through Georgia." The doctor felt his heart keeping time to the old tune, and swung his body back and forth, his toe tapping the ground. Before long the drum and fife paused at the crossroads below the church. It was an anxious moment. Would they pass along the turnpike or would they turn up the hill?

They were coming. Around the flag the children were leaping, and the old soldier's heart was thumping almost as loudly as the drum. Presently, beyond the wall that bordered the cemetery, came the flash of steel; above the wall a flag showed itself, its colors fluttering straight out. With thudding footsteps a file of soldiers swung before the church.

The drum and fife stopped, and the soldiers came to attention, the butts of their rifles falling to the ground. The officer stepped forward.

"You are the Reverend John Everett?" he asked, addressing the minister.

"Yes," replied the minister.

"A month or so ago," continued the officer, "you wrote to the Honorable

Mr. Cummings, the representative from this district in the State legislature."

"I did," replied the minister. "I am glad that you have come. There were so few of our veterans left that it occurred to me that the governor would be pleased to send an escort for this occasion."

"We are late," replied the officer. "The train was delayed at the junction." He stepped toward the veteran and touched his cap.

"Doctor Silas Bentley," said the minister, motioning toward the doctor.

The officer's hand flew to the hilt of his sword, and with a formal salute and flourish of the blade, as to a superior officer, he exclaimed:

"Private Silas Bentley, of Company A of the Thirty-fifth State Volunteers!"

Something clicked in the doctor's throat as he drew himself up stiffly.

The officer took a paper from his pocket. "My command and I," he said, addressing the doctor, "were instructed by his excellency, the governor, through the colonel of my regiment, to act as a guard of honor to the veterans living in this township." He spread open the letter, and read:

"You are to say to those present on this occasion above referred to that quite recently a historian of the Civil War has been delving into the official records of that now ancient period. It seems clear that by a confusion in the names of two brothers, and the error of a report, that the heroism of Silas Bentley, now a physician of the town mentioned, has never been suitably acknowledged, and, indeed, was accredited to his brother, Private John Bentley, of the same company and regiment. It has been established beyond cavil that John Bentley was killed while on sentry duty on the night before one of the great battles. Silas Bentley, adding self-effacement to his heroic action, has never made any attempt to take the credit due to him."

The doctor had turned himself away. The tears were streaming over his wrinkled face.

The officer continued:

"On September 17, 1862, during one of the most bitterly contested and bloody battles of the Civil War, the battle of Antietam, and the first time the young man was under fire, Private Silas Bentley, seizing a flag from

the hand of dying color bearer, with shot and shell falling around, led the way across a bridge through the trenches and into the enemies' guns, thus saving the day in his part of the field and bringing victory.

"Might I inquire if the facts are set forth in this letter?" asked the officer, addressing the veteran, who stood supporting himself on the flagstaff.

"He was my brother—better in every way than myself—and braver. And he

was my mother's favorite son—and dead. Then I was guilty of desertion—for half an hour. There were those who knew about it and talked about it. There are those here who have heard of it. But fifty years—fifty years makes it easy to speak."

The officer turned. "Right face!" he snapped. "Attention! Private Bentley, Company A, Thirty-fifth State Volunteers. Salute!"



FACE TO FACE ONCE AGAIN

JUDGE ASHLEY M. GOULD, of the District of Columbia supreme court, on a recent visit to Baltimore, went into the barber shop of his hotel to get a shave.

"Does you want me to go ovah it once or shave close?" asked the colored wielder of the razor.

"Twice over," replied the judge, settling himself comfortably in the chair.

Just after the first trip of the razor over the judicial countenance the barber stepped back and asked:

"Ain't you Jedge Gould?"

"Yes," replied Gould.

"Fo' de Lawd!" said the negro. "I ain't seed you for ten years."

"Where did you ever see me before?" queried Gould.

"De fust and de last time I ever seed you," answered the barber, "you sentenced me to eight years in de Atlanta Penitentiary."

The judge's form stiffened, and he admits that he felt uncomfortable, but all he did was to say sternly:

"Is that so? Once over is enough."



THE RETORT QUICK AND EASY

A YOUNG Boston clubman was faced one day with the information from his physician that, unless all his teeth were pulled out immediately, he would become a shivering physical wreck. Accordingly, the young sport was taken to the hospital the next day, put under the ether, and left to the mercy of an excellent and quick handed dentist. In twenty-five minutes his twenty-nine teeth were gone beyond recall.

After recovering from the shock and leaving the hospital, he appeared in his toothless condition at one of his clubs while his dentist prepared, ornamented, built, and finished up an artificial set of teeth for him.

"Well," remarked one of his fellow clubmen, "now that all your teeth are out, Bob, you can enjoy the knowledge that you have no more danger of pain in the future in that direction."

"Also," replied the afflicted one, "I shall enjoy the knowledge that there is far less bone in my head than in yours."

"But you will find," gently commented his friend, "that, under certain conditions, bone can swell."

The Quest of Douglas Wynne

By Frederick R. Bechdolt

Author of "The Sheriff of Sacatone," "Black Gold," Etc.

From country clubs and polo fields, peopled by care-free men and pretty girls who danced well, to the land of frozen snows—this is the jump Douglas Wynne makes in a tireless quest begun for the sake of his father

THE evening after the Guarantee and Loan Company went to smash a moon-faced man wearing a derby hat and a black overcoat, in one of whose pockets there was a warrant, rang Judge Wynne's doorbell. A few minutes later the ex-jurist, whose name had been a synonym for honor of the old-fashioned sort, departed from the house, a prisoner charged with misusing other people's money. For once Douglas Wynne happened to be at home after dinner, and so he witnessed the service of the warrant; he heard the officer's words and saw his father's head bend suddenly as under a blow, then slowly rear again until the pained eyes were gazing straight before them.

Up to that time the big, young idler had looked upon his world as being sheltered from all the ugly winds of adversity, a pleasant playground, dotted with country clubs and polo fields, peopled by carefree men and pretty girls who danced well. The first shock of disillusionment brought a surge of anger, but when Judge Wynne had waved him back, silencing his hot words of protest to the detective, the rage was succeeded by a sense of futility. He watched the pair leave in very much the same frame of mind as a man witnessing an appalling act of nature.

His sister met him in the hallway, and he saw that she was weeping, which gave him a chance to relieve his own feelings somewhat by comforting her. "Now, Amy," he said finally, "it's going to be all right, you know—just an out-

rageous mistake, some infernal business mix-up or other."

She clung to his arm. "Douglas," she cried, "you'll go downtown and see what you can do to help, won't you?" It is worth passing remark that this was the first occasion during his twenty-two years when any one had treated him as a responsible, full-grown human being, and perhaps it was for that reason that her words impressed him.

"Of course I will," he told her. "I'm off right now."

At the central police station, Douglas cooled his heels in the dingy office of the desk sergeant while a conference over bail bonds was going on behind the closed door of the inspector's room. Among these surroundings he looked particularly expensive and useless. It was the first occasion, with the single exception of his mother's death, when anybody had seen him really grave, and with the gravity there was mingled a puzzled, hurt expression, which accentuated that appearance of incapability.

At length the door of the inspector's office opened, and Judge Wynne came forth, a good ten years older than he had been an hour ago, but holding his head well back. One of the policemen by the desk sergeant's wicket saluted him with the same respect they had shown when he was on the superior bench a decade before; beside him walked John Roger, probably the best criminal lawyer they ever had out on

the coast. Douglas joined the pair and went down the street with them.

In those first days of the Klondike rush Seattle's sidewalks were crowded at all hours, and as he looked at the stream of men passing in the opposite direction the young idler felt a curious sensation of hostility toward all of them. Heretofore he had liked mankind, many of whom called him by the first half of his first name and showed anxiety to buy him drinks.

"I'm going home," Judge Wynne said in answer to his question. "Mr. Roger has arranged matters for the present. Thank you, Douglas; no, there's nothing you can do for me." There was in his voice, and in the stress he gave the pronoun, a trace of that bitterness which often comes to slack fathers when their sons have grown to manhood. He shook the lawyer's hand and hurried into the street to catch a cable car.

For some moments Douglas stood, watching him and wishing that there were a closer intimacy between them that he might perhaps receive some confidences or offer some suggestions to lighten his father's load of perplexity. Those last words stung him; nothing that he could do! There came to him, with that knowledge of his own uselessness, a savage jealousy, and he turned abruptly to speak to John Roger, but the lawyer was already on his way down the hill. Then Douglas thought of his sister's little outburst of faith, and he hurried after the man. "I want," he said, when he was beside Roger, "to know the nature of the charge against my father, and whether there is anything that I can do."

Roger maintained his pace, which was brisk for one so clumsily built, and looked straight ahead. "Nothing in the case to discuss at present." His voice was edged with the nasty rasp which he used when he wanted to bully a witness in cross-examination, but Douglas managed to keep silent, biting his lips until his purpose overrode his anger.

"Now," he urged, "you've no right to conceal from me what the whole

town is going to read in to-morrow morning's paper, and there must be something I can do."

Roger turned his head, and regarded the big, handsome idler with a stare like that of a boiled codfish; he saw the white lips and the blazing eyes, and he slackened his pace, stroking his Vandyke beard with thick fingers. "All right," he growled. "Come up to the office."

In an inner room of his long suite, surrounded by many tiers of yellow-bound volumes, most of which were filled with recipes for cooking up cases, the lawyer waved his visitor to a chair and took another himself. "Now," he said, "you don't know a thing about your father's situation, I suppose."

"I know that his business has been worrying him lately and that he was arrested this evening, that's all." Douglas gripped the polished arms of his chair and did his best to keep his voice emotionless.

John Roger continued: "Judge Wynne may go to prison, and, prison or not, he will be disgraced."

The boy started to rise, still gripping the chair arms. "You mean to say ——" He checked himself with difficulty.

"Oh, he won't be the first innocent man who's gone to Walla Walla, but that's not the point." The lawyer waved his hand to indicate his contempt for the question of guilt or innocence. "The point is, he's going there because he lacks one witness——"

"I wish," Douglas interrupted, "you'd give me an idea of the trouble."

"Listen!" Roger kept his eyes on the young man as if one part of his brain were attending to the compressed story while the major portion was studying his auditor's X-rayed soul. "Judge Wynne is a poor business man; other officials of the Guarantee and Loan are sharp as—wolves. These fellows got rich by milking the company—wrecking it. Technically, your father is responsible for their shady deals; morally, he's an innocent gull. But we can't prove that, and furthermore, when it comes to trial, he'll be shown up as

the actual manipulator. It's all a matter of bookkeeping."

"There must be accountants," the boy cried, "who know the facts."

"I said we lacked one witness," Roger reminded him. "An accountant has left town."

"The other people shipped him out?" Douglas asked quickly.

"Yes, sir," the lawyer growled; "the other people shipped him out. He took the books with him, thinking to shield the rogues—not expecting to harm Judge Wynne; I'm sure of that."

"Can't the man be caught?" Douglas demanded.

Roger smiled unpleasantly. "If you could furnish money to hire a private detective; you see, this fellow's somewhere in Alaska."

The young ornament to society was silent, thinking of that untracked northern wilderness, whence gaunt, hard-eyed miners had emerged with their tales of hardship and starvation, and then—"All right," said he quietly. "Who is the man and what does he look like?"

John Roger leaned slightly forward in his chair, the first bodily movement he had made to betoken any interest. "Why?"

"Because I mean to find him," said Douglas.

Roger settled back in his chair again, and there was a bare flicker of kindness in his eyes, but he spoke coldly: "I could keep your father out of jail—get bonds, obtain postponements, and so forth—but I fail to see—you don't strike me as the person to bring missing people back from Alaska."

Douglas flushed darkly, and swallowed hard. "My aunt left me some money—I've five hundred dollars or so of it yet—and I am not afraid of a little cold and hardship. I want that man's name and his description." He had risen, and was towering over the lawyer, who gazed up at that six feet of sartorial perfection and sighed.

"Very well! Henry Bush, a little man, black beard, bent shoulders, and the middle finger of his right hand is

crooked. He bought his ticket for Dyea, and has an outfit to go over the pass."

II.

Eight days later Douglas Wynne floundered through the sticky ooze of Dyea's wide flat toward the roaring town of tents and pine shacks through which men were pouring from all the world, and began his quest for a little, stoop-shouldered man with a black beard and a crooked middle finger. He was serenely confident of quick success, and the idea of hardship rather appealed to him; hardship would be a novelty.

Then he started carrying his food and supplies on his sweating back, racking his soft muscles with the same fierce punishment that the first man endured when he encountered the primal curse. Trembling with weariness at each day's close, he bungled at the cooking of his evening meal, after which he crept into his mildewed blankets on the sodden earth. He underwent the dreary ordeal of putting the same question over and over to heedless men, sullen with their lust for gold; of hearing the same curt answer every time. Occasionally, when the gray curtains of the rain parted, he saw the great, steep wilderness ahead, the black forests clinging to the flanks of snow-crested peaks, and wondered in what corner of that enormous land this little man might be.

Always at night there came to him the memory of his father's head bending suddenly as under a blow, then rearing again until the pained eyes were gazing straight before them, and with it the memory of his sister's little outburst of faith. And so, although he was beginning to know now what hardship was and to realize that success might lie a long, long way ahead, he stayed.

The trail from Dyea to Chilkoot summit was crowded with burden-bearing men whose camps covered the level places by the stream bed; a myriad of tents, a myriad of wood fires sending threads of blue smoke toward the little strip of heaven. Strings of pack ani-

mals tramped by, churning the mud to liquid thinness; the gorge resounded to oaths and outcries of rage; every face was looking toward the remote notch between snow peaks; every man was striving toward that pass as in a race.

There came to Douglas a feeling of helplessness. So many men; so many outspread camps; what earthly chance was there to find one whom he was seeking in this hegira? Then, just as he had steeled himself to bear toil's pain beyond the point where it had seemed as if he must succumb, he used his new-found will to outface the problem and to conquer it. "If I could only go on ahead of all of them and pick some place where I could watch them passing me," he reflected. The idea stuck, and, abiding, took possession of him. "A place where I could watch them passing me." He said it to himself, as if it were a creed. And so it came that one evening he repeated it half unconsciously to another on the trail.

They met at dusk in a narrow place, with a high bank on one side and the brawling river on the other; there was scant room for passage, and as he drew aside Douglas asked the man his time-worn question:

"A little man with bent shoulders, and a black beard, one crooked middle finger." The stranger repeated the description easily. "It's the second time you've asked me that to-day, young fellow." He was a tall man, rawboned, wide-shouldered, and there was a peculiar bleakness in his face; his eyes were like gray ice. They remained fixed on Douglas, as if the big, young fellow had awakened in him a peculiar interest.

"There are so many on the trail," Douglas began half in explanation, half apology, and then, because in the loneliness of this throng his heart was yearning for some one in whom he might confide, the outburst came. "If I could only find a place where I could watch them passing me!" he cried.

"That's luck," the bleak-faced man said abruptly. "For I'm looking for a good man who ain't crazy to shove right on inside, and I've got the place." He

let his eyes sweep Douglas from head to foot. "You're big enough; you look as if you'd stick."

"You know of such a place, you say?" Douglas asked eagerly.

The other nodded coolly. "My name's Wilson," said he. "And yours?" When Douglas had told him: "Well, Wynne, the idea's this: I'm packing grub and lumber over the pass to build a boat. I'm going to ferry outfits across Crater Lake when the jam comes. If you don't see your man there, it'll be because he's gone inside already, and you can grubstake enough in two months to follow him halfway to hell."

III.

So it came that Douglas Wynne grew hard and gaunt and bearded carrying provisions and lumber across the narrow alleyway between the rocks where Chilkoot summit stands out against the sky. Until cache and camp were made, and they knocked their bateau together under the hill which drops inland from the pass.

"Now," Wilson said quietly one morning, "let them come." He stood in the prow of a rude boat, leaning on a long pole; behind him, shrouded in mists through which phantasmal rocks loomed on its treeless shores, stretched Crater Lake; naked mountains walled it in, their sides obscured by driving clouds from which the rain oozed endlessly.

Douglas gazed beyond his partner across the black water at the gray curtains of the rain that hid the trail toward Linderman. "If he's not gone down there." He pointed toward Yukon's distant headwater.

"Ain't one chance in a hundred," Wilson replied surely. "We've passed outfits who've been up here since May, and this fellow's a chechahco." His voice became sharper. "We'll make five thousand dollars in the next two months."

The thousands who had hurried from all parts of the world, drawn northward by the tale of Klondike's wealth, began streaming down from the pass

with their first loads. They found Crater Lake and its long, difficult portage a snarl of boulders, precarious footing even for unladen men; they discovered the little boat with its two bearded ferrymen, one of whom always named the fee, while the other asked them whether they had seen anything of a bent-shouldered little man with a black beard and one crooked middle finger.

The days went by, the portage became crowded with striving men, an endless stream of faces drifting back and forth among the rocks; the number of the ferry's customers increased, but, watching all from dawn until dark, Douglas never got a glimpse of the man whom he sought.

The two partners loaded their little craft until its gunwale came within three inches of the water, and the winds howled down from the cañons, piling up seas which often compelled one man to bail with might and main while the other poled shoreward for dear life. Wilson, who had been inside before at Forty Mile, grinned at his frightened passengers. "Wait till you've seen Whitehorse," he told more than one. "This here is pie." Douglas made no comment at all, but always stood frowning, gazing straight ahead. It was as if his quest had made him oblivious to the trials of others. Many a weary packer, terrorized by the swift advance of the season, begging for more reasonable tolls, would find himself interrupted with a sharp "Say, have you seen anything of a little, stoop-shouldered man named Henry Bush, with a black beard and one crooked middle finger?"

But one morning in late summer, when sleet was mingling with the rain, Douglas was awakened from that indifference to others with a jerk. He was splitting some of their precious store of wood for the breakfast fire in the twilight of dawn when he heard some one talking among the caches by the portage. It was long before the first packers were due from Sheep Camp, and his mind reverted to the man whom he was seeking. He walked

swiftly toward the place whence the sound had come.

A woman's voice rang out, rising in a brief outburst of despair: "I can't go on. Let me stay here."

He saw her now, huddled at the foot of a great rock. A man was reaching toward her with both hands as if to raise her to her feet; his body was bending under a heavy pack. "There, there! We'll make it, dear." Douglas recognized him as one who had sought transportation for his outfit a week or so before, but had not the amount of the ferry toll. In the gray light of the early morning his face showed, drawn by pain and effort, but indomitable with the light of love.

"Only a little way, dear." The man's back bent lower, and his face came closer to hers; her eyes lighted, and she rose slowly. Swaying, she followed him, and Douglas watched them moving painfully away until the great rocks hid them from his sight.

Business was brisk that day. Men clambered round the landing place seeking passage for their goods. Toiling with Wilson at the heavy sacks and boxes, poling the little boat across the cold, black lake, Douglas remained silent, but instead of looking straight ahead, as he had always done before, he watched the portage on the left bank, seeking that man bent nearly double under his pack and the woman who staggered after him.

That evening, when the throng had departed for Sheep Camp and Douglas was standing alone outside the tent, he heard the rattle of a displaced stone on the portage, and he walked quickly to the cache where he had seen those two in the morning. The man was there alone, wrestling with a huge, bulky roll of canvas. As he strove to heave the bundle to his back there was a futility in his movements which made him seem like the inanimate thing, while the material seemed to be imbued with life and handling him.

"Have you got to get this across the portage to-night?" Douglas demanded, standing over him.

The man's eyes widened, and he

dropped the pack straps wearily from his arms. "Yes," he said dully, "I've got to get it across. My wife——" His voice rose suddenly, and he resumed the wrestling with the pack. "She's sick. I've got to pitch this tent or——"

"Here!" Douglas took the bundle from his shoulders. "You fetch some of those boxes down and we'll ferry the whole cache across."

"That's all right," he explained, as the other started to speak of the price. "I don't want your money. I'm doing this because I want to help you." And then he laughed, taking pleasure in this good deed done for another.

Long before they reached the opposite shore Douglas saw a little patch of radiance there, and steered his course by it. Crouching beside the fire, he finally distinguished the woman's form. As soon as the prow touched the stones his passenger leaped out and hurried to her. Douglas heard his voice, and its vibrance sent a thrill through him. He began unloading the bateau, working so rapidly that when the packer returned he found the cargo on the bank and Douglas shoving off.

"On top of one of those boxes," the boy called, "there's a canvas bag with a couple of hundred dollars or so in it. You take her down to Linderman to-morrow and make a decent camp. Hire Siwashes to pack the outfit for you; that way she'll get a rest and"—there came a catch into his voice—"she'll have her proper chance." He leaned heavily on his pole, and the boat shot out upon the darkened lake.

"Wait!" the packer shouted after him. "Tell me your name! Some day——"

Douglas laughed for the second time that evening. "All right," he called. "Fair enough. But don't you bother looking too hard for me. Wynne, Douglas Wynne. I hope—your wife—I wish you both good luck."

He was whistling when he came into the lighted tent at the other end of the lake, and Wilson glanced sharply at him. "Find your man?" he asked.

"By Jove!" Douglas shook his head. "I never even thought to ask the man."

The novelty of helping another had made him forget his own trouble.

Two days later a customer, who had hearkened to Douglas' question with more than the usual attention, repeated the description slowly. "Yes," said he, "I've seen that man. He was camped next to me down near Dyea last May. He hooked up with a sour-dough outfit and they crossed the pass in June going light. They must be in Dawson long ago."

Wilson, who had been listening, shrugged his wide shoulders. "Anyway, you've got his trail. What's more, two Swedes are bringing lumber down the hill to build another boat. I'm ready to start inside with you, and we'll be in Dawson before the snow flies."

IV.

On Linderman they whipsawed boards and knocked their bateau together, and when the days were growing bleak and gray they started down the lakes among the last of the year's strange fleet. They sailed Bennet's Length before a rainy wind; they shot Whitehorse while the foaming waters yelled beside their gunwale, and they rowed across La Barge in the teeth of sleet-laden gales. One evening as they were lying close to the bank above Five Fingers, stowing their cargo more snugly, they saw a Peterborough emerging from the darkening north. A bearded giant hailed them from the bow, holding his hand aloft in warning. "If you've any sense," he called, "turn back."

Douglas rose abruptly from between the thwarts. "Have you seen anything of a man by the name of Henry Bush, a little man with a black beard and one crooked middle finger?"

The canoe edged in closer to their own craft, and the giant nodded. His eyes were large, and his face was drawn as with great fear. "That man was working in the Alaska Commercial Company's office the day before we left." And then his voice rose again. "Take my advice. Turn back. They're out of food." As if the words had

awakened his terror anew, he bent to his paddle, and the canoe swept out into the stream. Douglas called after him, but he only shook his head. "I've got to get out before snow flies or starve," he called.

Wilson smiled grimly into the great north. "Grub enough to last us two years," he said, "and two thousand dollars in our money belts to boot. Let Dawson starve."

Douglas gripped his oar, and turned his face into the dusk-shrouded north as his partner had done; his eyes were blazing with eagerness. "Shove off!" He waved his oar defiantly at the wilderness ahead. "I've got him now!"

They pushed the boat into the stream, and let her drift toward the rapids, with Wilson at the steering oar. When they saw before them the gaunt, black pinnacles of rock rising from the foam-lashed waters, and heard the bellow of the river chafing in its narrow bed, the current gave the prow a mighty tug. They shot into the channel, and the roaring of the waters beat upon their ears, a hurricane of sound. A few brief seconds of overwhelming noise, of movement that took away the breath, and they were emerging at the lower end; the sour dough was leaning hard on his steering oar, Douglas was crouching in the bow, peering at the swirling, white-patched surface ahead. There came a sharp crack, and Wilson saved himself from falling overboard by a supreme effort; the stout oar had snapped in his hands. The prow wavered uncertainly, and swerved toward a glistening black rock; there came a lurch, and while both men were fighting with their hands to fend her off, the craft tilted until the most of her load had gone into the hissing stream. Then, as if the river were satisfied at the toll it had exacted, the bateau righted herself once more and floated away into more placid waters. They headed her into the shore a mile below, and crawled, dripping, to the bank, while the north wind whipped them to the bone.

Wilson found dry matches in his box, and they got wood together for a fire.

While they were drying themselves by the blaze the sour dough looked at the remnant of their outfit. "Three-quarters of our grub is gone, and my money belt was on the top; it's at the bottom of the river now. We've barely food enough to last us until spring."

Douglas said nothing, gazing straight into the north. He was thinking of the little man with a black beard, and Dawson only a few days ahead. But in Dawson, roaring through the long nights with its horde of fresh-come adventurers and its nugget-weighted sour doughs, with its pallid camp followers and dance-hall women, Douglas learned that Henry Bush had disappeared again. Two weeks before he came the little man had left, without a word to any of those about him.

Day after day of asking the same weary question brought no news, and finally, when he came to camp one evening, Wilson looked at him curiously. "I've bought some dogs," the sour dough said grimly, "and to-morrow we're going to clear out. There's been a strike up near the Dome." Douglas remained silent, and the other frowned. It's like this. I'm after gold, and if *you* don't get gold before the winter's over, you're going to leave the country broke, without an ounce of grub."

"Bush is as apt to be up near the Dome as anywhere," Douglas answered quietly. "I'll go."

V.

Winter lay heavy on the northland hills behind the Klondike's mouth; gray twilight hovered over the white snow; the air was absolutely still; from the earth a fog rose like frozen breath from a fur-wrapped man. Out of a hundred ravines wood smoke climbed into the drab mist. Here, where the Klondike's tributaries were sleeping their eight months' sleep beneath the ice, ten thousand men were delving ten thousand pits into the frozen hills. In one of these ravines, a shallow gulch upon whose slopes a scattering of prim spruces and dainty birches remained,

survivors of last summer's forest, Douglas toiled that day with Wilson. He had combed down the surrounding creeks, and he had met with no tidings of Henry Bush. It was as if the northern wilderness had swallowed the accountant. Now, with their last hundred pounds of flour and their last side of bacon, with a few dried salmon for their dogs, the two men were bending their backs in the hope that the next day would reveal the gold upon whose discovery depended their staying in the country. Otherwise they must journey on to Fort Yukon, where the companies were feeding refugees.

This evening ended the completion of the last shaft. The sour dough was huddled in the bottom of the hole, whose thin layer of gravel they had thawed by banked fires the night before. Lifting his filled shovel, dumping its contents into a rude tub beside him, his eyes gleamed in the murky pit. Finally, "All right," he called. Into the frozen silence came the long whine of the winch; the rope tightened, the tub began its ascent.

On a platform at the shaft mouth Douglas stood turning the heavy crank. Save for a narrow slit above his high, upturned collar, through which his eyes showed, an aperture all rimmed with hoarfrost, the fur cap hid his face. He gripped the crank with mittened hands, bending his back, then straightening again, and the tub came crawling up. At last it reached the surface, and he dumped its contents. At the day's little heap of frozen dirt which held their fate he gazed with hope.

That evening, when their meal was done, the sour dough nodded. "Once more," said he, "and then——" He shrugged his shoulders; he was old in this battle against hostile fate. They went over to their stove, and Douglas rolled up his sleeves, revealing his huge arms, as hard as iron now. He plunged them into a tubful of lukewarm water, and lifted out a pan of the dirt which they had brought with them from the day's mining. "Here's hoping," he said lightly, and began breaking up the larger pieces. He grasped the edges of

the pan, and tilted it to one side, took in some water, and began the peculiar, rotary movement which miners use. Wilson watched him gravely as he swished the pan's edge at intervals in the water and washed away the lighter dirt. Bit by bit the contents grew less; he stooped and picked out several pebbles, looking longingly for the dull-yellow glint of gold. At last, when only a handful of dirt was left, he sank the pan edge for the final time, and, with a quick wrist movement, spread the contents over the flaring side. Black sand, and that was all.

The two men faced each other, and as they looked into each other's eyes the sour dough was the first to speak.

"Well, lad," said he, "we done our best. Looks like one meal a day and beat it for the outside when the first steamer comes."

Douglas stood silent for a moment. Then, "I'm going to stay," he said.

VI.

Two days later, while Douglas and Wilson were standing before their cabin door, a dog team came up the trail. Leader, swing dogs, wheelers, six long-haired huskies, tawny gray like wolves, they leaped into their collars; behind them whined the long Yukon sled with its lashings, its side pieces of webbed rawhide, and its two plow-like steering handles.

"Humph!" Wilson muttered as he saw these things. "A sour dough!"

The driver was wearing mukluks like a native, his fur-trimmed parka fluttered round his knees; its hood was thrown well back, and now, as he came nearer, his face showed. The frost had left a scar straight across it, a livid mark, as-if a red-hot iron had passed over cheeks and nose from side to side. The man was walking with a smooth, tireless swing, which suggested steel rather than bone and muscle. In dogs and sled and driver, in the very load under the crossed lashings, there was a grim harmony. The sight brought with it the picture of a long trail leading over ice hummocks, on through

silent forests, and across wind-swept summits toward the flashing aurora borealis.

The lead dog came opposite the cabin, snatching a mouthful of snow as he passed; the gaunt-faced driver raised his eyes and saw the two men watching him. "Whoa!" he called, and the dogs threw themselves upon the trail, tongues lolling, grinning like wolves.

"Morning!" The driver scanned Wilson and Douglas briefly. "Know a man named Wynne in these parts?" he asked abruptly.

"That's him." Wilson gestured toward Douglas. The driver released his hold on the sled handles; the lead dog, who had been turning his head occasionally, peering back at him, threw himself full length on the snow and ceased attending on his movements.

"My name's Fraser." The man walked over to them and shot a side-long look at Wilson. "This your pardner?"

Douglas, puzzled, answered in the affirmative.

"All right." Fraser's voice had dropped, as if he feared some one over-hearing him, and he nodded curtly toward Douglas. "They told me down at Hunker I'd run across you here some'rs. I got a pardner named Jim Davis——"

Douglas shook his head. "Never heard of him."

"Maybe." Fraser shrugged his wide shoulders. "But you're the man I'm lookin' for; you fit the specifications he give me, and I've a message to leave for you." His voice had grown louder, but now it sank again. "There's a stampede on. If you come down to Dawson, you are in. It's a good crick, rich dirt and only ten feet to bed rock."

He turned to go. "Wait!" Douglas called after him. "Who is Jim Davis? Where did he say he knew me?"

"Can't say; he didn't tell me where he'd crossed trails with you. We prospected together—three of us. Of course, if you don't want to go——" He strode over to the sled and gripped the handles.

"Oh, we'll go all right," Wilson called.

"I'll see you, then, in Dawson." Fraser was shaking the steering handles from side to side. "Mush!" His voice was harsh; the whole team leaped into their collars. "Haw!" the sled went swishing through the deep snow, describing a wide arc, and came back into the trail again. Douglas stood staring after it as it went down the ravine.

"Man." Wilson cried. "Get busy! We're off for Dawson!"

"But who," Douglas demanded, "is Jim Davis?"

"Ask Jim Davis when you come to the end of Fraser's trail." Wilson was dragging their own sled dogs to the harness. "Don't waste wind now; stampedes don't come to everybody these days. It's your last chance and mine."

Douglas shook his head as he turned to help in the packing. "I never asked that fellow about Bush," he said.

VII.

Midnight was near. Where Dawson faced the Yukon's furrowed ice a hundred windows glared on the arid snow. Within the barrooms men crowded thick, gambling, dancing, drinking, and the gold dust flowed from the long buckskin pokes upon the weigher's scales. Yet in the revelry there was a strange undernote of expectation. A bearded waltzer loosed his grasp of his rouged partner and leaned toward a man passing in the dance. "Dollar to the pan on bed rock; I got it straight," he whispered. A gambler looked up from the faro layout, forgetting to turn the cards, and asked one of the crowd behind him: "Any one know when he's going to start?" Whenever a front door opened cloaking that portion of the room in a dense cloud of steam, a hundred pairs of eyes peered into the fog, searching it for Fraser's face.

Back on the hill, among the silent cabins, men sat in dimly lighted little rooms, leaning forward, listening for

footsteps on the snow, and dogs lay sleeping in shadowed places with their harness on them, the laden sleds behind, while fur-clad drivers stood near, waiting in the night like sentinels.

The street door of a log hotel opened, and in the brief interval before it closed again a form stood out against the yellow lamplight; Fraser's face showed below his cap of lynx skin, and the frost scar stood out on it like a black bar. A half dozen spies were racing away in silence before the man had gained the sidewalk, and a few minutes later the murmur of voices in the glaring dance halls had swelled into a roar. The sentinel drivers were dragging their dogs from the drifts, lining them out in the harness; the watchers in the cabins straightened suddenly, hearing swift footsteps in the snow.

Fraser went straight to the river bank. A man hailed him in a whisper from the darkness, and he found his waiting sled. He seized the steering handles, shook them from side to side until the runners were freed from the frozen snow, and then his voice rose sharp on the keen night air:

"Mush!" As the dogs leaped forward and the sled swept down the bank into the river trail, a score of other voices came like a score of echoes in the rear. And now the yelp of huskies, the crack of whips, the oaths of striving men following him as he raced on. Across the northern heavens swept the aurora, silent, majestically cold. Under its radiance the whining sleds, the panting dogs, the men striding on limbs of steel moved on, black patches against the snow. Near the head of that procession were Wilson and Douglas Wynne.

All night the sour dough led them at a relentless pace, and he was hard—lean as a timber wolf when the snow is on the ground. His dogs were the pick of Dawson. Down the river for nearly five miles, then to the right and up the bank. After that the trail climbed into a nest of barren hills. Behind him, as the night wore on, the procession changed its order; gaps grew wider, sleds fell back, and others

passed them. Already the fit were forging to the front, the weaker were lagging in the rear, but Wilson and Douglas hung to the place in which they had started. The former was conserving the strength of his dogs whenever there was any chance, sparing neither himself nor his partner to lighten the work, and the latter was toiling as grimly as the oldest miner in the line, his face set, his eyes looking straight ahead into the darkness as if searching for a bent-shouldered little man with a black beard.

When daylight began to glint along a lofty ridge it revealed, in silhouette against the sky, a score of black patches struggling, far apart, crawling through the drifts. Far down in a ravine beyond smoke columns were climbing toward the heavens, and a cluster of tents showed around Fraser's camp. Wilson in one of them nodded to Douglas: "If the dogs hold out, we'll make it among the first."

Late that afternoon they leaped from their sleeping bags and cooked a hasty meal. They struck their tent, and were away among the earliest. That night their route lay along watercourses where the snow was deep and soft, and the stampedeers united their efforts, beating the drifts with boughs, trampling them down with snowshoes before the dogs. The temperature was falling rapidly; the wind had died down, and the still cold, which makes great trees crack open, crawled in through their furs. The aurora flashed lurid, terrible, and there came from the heavens, where it was playing, a faint sound like brushing of giant wings. Always the grim, silent leader, with the dark cold scar across his face, urged his dogs onward, never slackening for rest or breath. Behind him the unprepared and the unfit fell away at wider and wider intervals, and gradually departed on the back track. Always Wilson and Douglas hung to their own place. The sour dough's eyes were as bleak as the snow-covered ridges around him; the eyes of Douglas were burning with a passionate eagerness.

The next day the cold invaded their

tents and leaked into their fur-lined sleeping bags, and when they started the third night the dogs whined, rebelling against facing it. They traveled over a broken country, crossing barren ridges, coasting down into valleys, zigzagging slowly upward again to other sky lines. Toward morning, while the sleigh was running down one of these steep slopes, Wilson, who was at the steering handles, uttered a sharp oath, and Douglas saw him reel in his tracks. He had sprained his ankle badly.

"Get on the load!" Douglas shouted harshly. "Get on! I'll keep them going." He steered and drove; he heaved to lift the runner over bad places, and toiled, trail breaking, and when he had made camp in the morning he cooked their meal. The sour dough was biting his lips with pain, and weak from the cold which had attacked him as he lay inert on the load, but when he spoke of the possibility of their dropping out Douglas laughed grimly. "We are going on," he said.

Other outfits passed them one by one that night, but they hung on, and when the light began drifting downward from the hilltops across the snow they were the last of the procession. The frozen sun was glowing through a frigid aura of frost particles, surrounded by three weird, distorted sun dogs, when Douglas urged the wearied team up a narrow valley and beheld the members of the party clustered round a common center. There Fraser stood, and another man was beside him.

The dogs halted on the fringes of the semicircle of men and sleds, and the sour dough clambered painfully from his resting place. Fraser glanced at them under his cap of lynx skin, and said a word to the other man, who nodded. Now Douglas noticed a thread of smoke ascending from behind a little ridge, and close beside the pair, in the center of the half circle, a shaft mouth. Fraser raised his hand. "Them that I call come on with me; the others wait until they have staked." His voice was commanding; it was the old law of the stampede, the law of

Forty Mile and Circle City, of Porcupine and Telegraph before them.

Then Fraser pointed to Douglas. "You're number one," he called. The other man smiled and held out his hand as Douglas staggered up to him. "I'm Jim Davis," said he, "the man you grubstaked that night on Crater Lake."

Mechanically Douglas took the proffered hand; he felt his senses slipping from him. As from a long distance he heard Fraser, calling other names, and, like a vision through clouded glass, he beheld the bearded contenders in that grim van walking from the semicircle toward them. He summoned all his energies to hold himself erect, and finally, as his mind began to work again. "I remember you now," he said dully. "Lord, that seems long ago!" A minute passed. "Your wife?" he asked.

"She's fine. Down in Dawson." Davis smiled at him. "The baby came on Linderman and his name is Wynne."

An hour went by; the work of staking was done. Jim Davis took Douglas by the arm. "In the cabin," said he, "there's room for you and your pardner to sleep; it beats a tent this cold weather. Come on, now; we'll get a bite to eat."

As he was helping Wilson up the trail toward the cabin, whose smoke he had seen coming over the ridge, Douglas thought once more of Henry Bush, and it came to him with a throb of self-reproach—so like a religion had this quest become to him—that he had allowed the accountant to leave his mind during these last hours of excitement. Then they entered the warm room.

There were three bunks along the side, and a man was sleeping in one of them—sleeping very quietly, it would seem. Jim Davis waved his hand toward him. "He's in bad shape; there was three of us staked, and it was his last day's work. Country's got him, I guess; I doubt if he'll ever go out."

Mechanically—for the habit of looking closely at every man whom he met was now a part of him—Douglas stepped nearer to the bunk, and first he saw that the black-bearded little

man, whose waxen hands were lying motionless outside the fur robes, had one crooked middle finger; then, even as he recognized the other points of the description, realizing that he had ended his quest, he discovered that Henry Bush was dead.

He made no outcry; no sound escaped his lips. But as he stood gazing down at that white face, whose pallor was accentuated by the darkness of the beard, his own face became grim. It was as if fate had used death to play a practical joke on him.

But later, when the flutter which the tragedy brought with it had died away, Jim Davis, the man of Crater Lake, said to Douglas: "It's queer about him; he had a package that he always kept under the bunk, and he seemed to set a store by it. I've always wondered what it might hold."

Then Douglas remembered the books of which John Roger had spoken that evening of his father's arrest. He found them there under the bunk, wrapped in oiled paper, which, in its turn, was covered by heavy canvas, and so, when the stampedeers returned to Dawson and recorded their claims with the gold commissioner, he brought the

bundle with him. He stored it in the safe of the Alaska Commercial Company, and when he came out again from the new diggings in the spring he took it from its place of safe-keeping.

In June the first steamer down from the Yukon docked in Elliot Bay, and the usual old-time crowd of miners came streaming down the gangplank, grim-faced men, bearded, and weather-worn. Of the procession Big Fraser was one and one was Wilson, the sour dough. Before those two walked Douglas Wynne, and there was something of the sternness of the Northland in his eyes now.

Judge Wynne had aged a great deal in those months, but his head was still back, and his eyes were still looking bravely straight ahead of him. And now, when he looked upon those long-missing books, the removal of that load of accusation seemed to make his shoulders straighten. But that was from relief. The thing which abided with him, the pride which made him over after that period of heavy stress, came from the sight of a man who had come back to him from the distant Northland. That man was Douglas Wynne.



THE IRISH FORM OF PERSUASION

WHEN William P. Spurgeon was city editor of the *Washington Post*, he was proud of his ability to keep his reporters spurred up to the top notch. He got their best work out of them.

One day a reporter turned in a story in which some of the essential facts were missing. There being apparently no excuse for such a piece of work, he rebuked, not to say censured and bawled out, the offender.

"That's no way to get work out of me," replied the reporter. "Approving talk is what makes me work. Besides, you've passed worse work of mine than that."

"Young man," said Spurgeon, with great and awful dignity, "that reminds me of the Irishman who was being let down into a well.

"Tim," he called to the fellow who was letting him down, 'I want to come back up a minute. Haul me up. I've got something to say.'

"Not a chance!" roared the other Irishman.

"I'll show you! If you don't let me up, I'll cut the rope."

"And?" queried the reporter.

"You've cut the rope," concluded Spurgeon.

The Leathernecks

By Berton Braley

THERE once was a time I said "Damn the Marines!
They never do nuthin' toward earnin' their beans
But drillin' around in a nice khaki suit
An' linin' up straight when we come to salute,
They're nuthin' but battleship flatties," I said,
"Just battleship flatties that's kept here an' fed,
But don't lift a hand when we scrubs or we cleans."
Yes, onct on a time I said "Damn the Marines!"

But that was in days when I thought I was wise,
Just one of these cocky an' know-it-all guys,
Before I'd been up against things as they are,
An', take it from me, I was due for a jar!
I got it. A bunch of us jackies ashore
Was jumped on by niggers, a thousand or more,
An' there in the jungle we dropped to our knees
An' fought for our lives in the brush an' the trees.

They had us surrounded—a lot of us drops;
The outlook was bad when them battleship cops
Comes slidin' up sudden from no one knows where,
An' just takes a hand in our little affair.
We seen their old khaki, an' say, in that muss,
It looks like the garments of angels to us,
The niggers they left that particular scene,
An' me—I was kissin' a U. S. Marine.

An' that's how I learned—as I should have known then—
That U. S. Marines is some Regular Men,
The first ones ashore, an' the last to come back,
When trouble is started with white men or black;
Yés, call 'em "ship's flatties," an' "leathernecks," too,
But when things is started they sees 'em clear through;
They're first-class he-fighters, who uses their beans,
An'—only a fool would say "Damn the Marines!"

A Blind Trail

By Roy W. Hinds

It has been said that every criminal, however careful in covering his tracks, always leaves one clew that leads the sleuth to his quarry. Here is a man who sets out to commit a robbery, and, planning for every smallest detail, leaves behind him an absolutely blind trail

IT was to be a finished robbery, with no chance for a smart detective to discover a clew. Bruce Lanseer was determined to slip up on no smallest detail, and he sat in his third-floor room, with the door bolted and curtains drawn close, patiently blotting out identification trails. In his lap was a coat, and with a finely pointed penknife he was picking at the threads that held the tailor's mark on the lining of an inside pocket. Soon he had removed this. Then he held the bit of lettered cloth to the gas flame, crumbling into fine dust the ember that resulted from this operation. Carefully he went over the clothing again, assuring himself that not a vestige of identification remained about the garments. Previously he had stripped the pasted labels from a hat. He even had removed the dealer's mark from the under side of a new four-in-hand necktie, and the maker's label, the cloth finger straps from a pair of shoes. With the manner of a man who had completed the final details of some far-reaching operation, he laid aside the clothing, all of which was brand-new, and retired for the night.

Next morning Lanseer, refreshed by sound slumber, arose long before his accustomed hour and dressed himself in a business suit he had often worn. Daylight had not yet come, nor would it for another hour. He packed into a new suit case the new suit, the new soft hat, new necktie, and a new pair of shoes. The underclothing he wore was new, as was his shirt, with no tell-tale laundry marks adorning them.

Even the handkerchiefs in his pockets were new. The socks he wore had been selected with care; there was no imprint of any kind upon them. All his old linen with their incriminating laundry marks reposed in the dresser drawers; his old neckties, save the one he had on, hung from their ring. In the new suit case were his shaving and toilet articles. When he left the room he carried two suit cases, one empty. The room would be found, he told himself, exactly as it had been on other occasions when he had departed for over-Sunday visits in the country. Lanseer left the house unobserved, he was sure—nor was he seen by prying eyes from near-by houses.

Two blocks from the rooming house, Lanseer boarded a cross-town car, and did not alight until he had reached the far side of the city. He made his way to a hotel, a respectable and moderate-priced establishment that drew considerable transient trade and where strangers were frequent. He engaged a room, went to it, and unpacked the new suit case. He hung the suit in a closet, as he did the hat, placing the shoes and other articles where they would not be easily observed. Then he breakfasted and walked about the city until eight o'clock. At that hour he boarded a subway train and went downtown to the bank, carrying one of the empty suit cases—the old one.

There would be no bungling about this robbery, Lanseer told himself. He was not going into the thing haphazardly. Three months he had spent in mapping out his plans. He looked back

now, and couldn't for the life of him see one thing, one detail of the most minute description, that he had overlooked. If the robbery itself was as clean as had been the covering-up process, the chances were a million to one in his favor.

"There are ninety millions of people in the United States," so he had reasoned to himself. "I'm going out and mingle with those ninety millions. There are thousands and thousands of men who will answer a description of myself. I am five feet ten inches tall, weigh a hundred and eighty pounds, am clean-shaven, with black hair and gray eyes. My features are regular, and there is not a scar that any one will remember on my body. There is not a birthmark. There is no distinct characteristic about my appearance or in my manner that would set me apart from thousands of others."

"Why," and he had smiled to himself in confident satisfaction, "I see fellows in the subway every day, lots of them, who answer to any printed description that would be sent out about me. They're certainly not going to arrest every man who happens to be five feet ten and who weighs one-eighty. My trail is absolutely going to stop at the door of the bank. The heavy percentage is on my side; I don't see how I can lose."

When the robbery had come to be a serious thing to Lanseer he had recalled that there were just three photographs of himself in the world. He possessed one himself, a married sister had another, and a young woman friend the other. His sister—Lanseer's father and mother were dead—had a baby picture of him, but that did not matter. On his next visit to his sister's house, a few miles from the city, he had obtained the photograph he wished to destroy.

"I want to give this to a friend in New York," he told her. "I'll send you a new one, when I have some taken soon."

The sister had turned over the picture without question. On a pretext just as plausible he had obtained the

photograph from his girl friend. Thus he was enabled to sweep from the earth all likenesses of himself.

Then another thought struck him. He went to the photographer who had made the pictures and ordered another half dozen. The photographer rummaged among all the negatives he had on file, and announced sorrowfully that the negative of Lanseer's likeness must have been destroyed with many others. It had been so long—about two years—since the sitting, you know.

"Oh, well," Lanseer said carelessly, "I'll have a new sitting in a few days. No, not to-day, but before long."

Thus was his mind freed of worry about photographs.

He had bought his new outfit of clothing at various stores in strange parts of the city. He had smuggled them to his room and out again without having been seen. When he had completed his plans there was not a shred by which he could be followed. Only the accident of meeting people who knew him would run him down, and he knew this was not likely to happen, for he was going far away. He was satisfied with everything now. The robbery would be easy, he knew, and there only remained the question of getting out of the city. As he would have at least thirty-six hours' start on his pursuers, he felt that his flight could be made in comparative leisure.

"Things couldn't be better," he told himself as he entered the bank, empty suit case in hand.

As the hour drew near a slight twitching fastened upon Lanseer's nerves, a hollow sensation smote his lower chest, and he swallowed dryly and nervously. Bending farther over his ledger, he sought to regain his steadiness by footing up the long rows of figures that lay before him, even though this task had once been done. Mechanically he reckoned the totals, and as quickly forgot them. The fingers of one hand beat a faint rat-a-tat-tat on the desk, and he constantly shifted his feet beneath. A porter, brushing the floor outside the cage,

mumbled way down in his throat an unintelligible song. Lanseer turned an appraising glance upon the colored man, whose brush was nearing the rear of the bank. In two minutes, he reckoned, the porter's work there would be done.

"Have you cleaned up in here yet, Joe?" he called to the colored man.

"I'll be in there in a hour," the man replied. "I'se gotta go upstairs first."

The two minutes sped, and with them the nervousness that had shaken Lanseer. When the door had closed behind the porter the period of contemplation gave way to the time for action, and in that instant the reserve forces of Lanseer's nature came to the front. He stretched forth a hand, and smiled grimly as he noted it to be as steady as the hand of a waxen figure. Like the seasoned actor who, having faced countless audiences, suffers the same pangs of fright each time he stands within the shelter of the wings, and once before the multitude of upturned faces regains his full composure, so did Lanseer when it came his time to act. He was alone in the bank.

Deftly, and without a movement wasted, Lanseer transferred the empty suit case into the vault. With this flat open upon the floor at his feet, one by one he tucked into it the oblong packages of bills labeled five hundred dollars and one thousand dollars, which he took from a neatly piled stack on the vault shelf. Barring unlooked-for happenings, he knew he had about half an hour to complete this detail of the job, as Hillman Towle, the cashier, would return to the bank at that time. Towle never did anything differently. He spoke always in the same tone, measured his cautious steps the same length, and cropped his pointed beard so regularly and with such nicety that it never seemed to grow. Towle had told Lanseer that he would be absent from the bank on this Saturday afternoon until four o'clock. Towle always, in summer, played tennis on Saturday afternoons, and he returned from the courts always at the same time—four o'clock. Lanseer knew there was no danger of his return before that time, and also

that he would not be a minute later. The bank closed at noon Saturdays, but Lanseer had regulated his work so that he would be detained this day far beyond the hour of closing.

When the figures that were automatically stamping themselves upon his brain as he glanced at the band of each package had mounted to the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, Lanseer bent down and closed the suit case, snapping its clasps into place and pressing the self-locker into its catch. Then he shifted it to the spot where, empty, it had reposed throughout the day, beneath a long counter outside the vault. He switched off the vault lights, and resumed his place before the ledger. Exactly at four o'clock the lock in the front door turned, and Towle stepped into the bank.

"Still at work, I see," the cashier commented pleasantly in his evenly modulated voice. He came through the cage doorway, close to Lanseer's desk, dropping the suit case containing his tennis suit and outfit upon the floor near by.

"Yes, sir," Lanseer replied, smiling. He flung the covers of the ledger together and stood up. "I've nearly finished up the Fidelity papers, sir; maybe I had better go ahead with them, and put them in the vault with my ledger."

"I would do that if I were you," Towle said.

So Lanseer busied himself with the Fidelity papers, while the cashier went to his own office at the front of the bank. In the course of a few minutes Joe came into the cage to brush the floor. Lanseer watched him narrowly as he swung his broom underneath the counter; then he saw Joe push the suit case to a clean spot a yard away and go on about his work. Lanseer took the Fidelity papers and his books into the vault, and placed them on their accustomed shelves. Then he came outside, switching off the lights again. He notified Towle that the vault was ready for closing.

The cashier came to the rear of the bank, and did just what the other man knew he would do—glanced, without

seeing, into the darkened pit of the vault, and then swung its huge doors shut. There was a sliding of bolts, a clicking of levers, a twirling of wheels—and the great vault was locked and barred until eight o'clock Monday morning. A slight tenseness passed from Lanseer's muscles, and he slipped into his coat. He was calmly flecking a dust spot from his hat when the cashier spoke.

"I hope, Mr. Lanseer," Towle said, "that you will enjoy your visit in the country over Sunday."

"Thank you, sir; I'm sure I will," Lanseer replied. He marveled at his own steadiness.

"If you find it desirable, Mr. Lanseer, you need not hesitate to postpone your return. An extra day or two is yours, if you wish."

"That's kind of you, sir, but I'm sure it will be convenient for me to get back Monday. Good-by, sir."

"Good-by, sir."

With the suit case swinging idly by his side, the young bookkeeper stepped into the street and made his way to the elevated line. On the way to the little hotel the suit case rested end up in front of him. He left the suit case in the room in a closet, and then went out among some of the cheaper stores, procuring toilet articles, a new shaving set, various articles of wear, neckties, linen, underwear, handkerchiefs, and so on. His purchases at any one store were not large. In the seclusion of his room, he removed marks of identification from his new purchases, so that when he was through no one could tell by the articles in his possession that he had purchased them in New York. He also purchased a traveling bag. He dressed fully in his new clothing, packing all the old in the new suit case—the old suit, his old shaving articles and toilet set. Long chance though he knew it was, he early in the night expressed the old suit case, containing the stolen fortune, to "John Dallman, St. Louis, Missouri."

He smiled to himself as the express clerk asked carelessly:

"What's the value of it?"

"Oh, fifty dollars, I guess," Lanseer answered calmly enough.

Returning to the hotel, Lanseer made inquiries about trains for Boston. He idled about the city, near the hotel, until ten o'clock, when he returned to his room. Soon he left quietly, unobserved by persons who had seen him before. No one paid him the slightest attention; no one looked twice at him. He bore the new suit case and traveling bag.

There were few persons on the ferryboat on which Lanseer left New York. He remained on the lower deck, outside the cabins, for the night was warm. A drowsy chauffeur nodded on his seat close by. There were a few wagons on the boat, but the drivers were unmindful of the man with the two grips at the after rail. Cautiously, quickly, Lanseer raised the suit case and dropped it over the rail into the dark waters below. Just a faint splash followed this action—too slight to be noticed above the swish of the boat wheels. He now possessed nothing that had been his in the life he was leaving. The suit case was heavy, Lanseer thought, and would sink even before it became water-soaked. He felt now that he had snapped the last thread that bound him to the past. He turned and looked backward over the growing stretch of water between himself and the city. His trail would disappear as quickly as the foaming strip in the wake of the ferryboat would settle into quiet again, he told himself. The boat shuddered as the velocity of the engines tapered down on nearing the Jersey shore. Hawser chains clanked, and soon Lanseer, with the traveling bag, stepped into the ferryhouse, where he purchased a ticket for Washington. He took particular pains to have the ticket seller observe him, passing some few remarks with the man. He would tell the detectives, Lanseer thought, that a man of his description had bought a ticket for Washington.

He passed into the train shed. Long rows of coaches stretched before him, and at the head of some of them were

signboards. One pointed the way to the Dixie Express, the train for which his ticket had been bought. Farther on was the Midwestern Limited, and to this Lanseer made his way, displaying to the porter a ticket for St. Louis, purchased several days before. Once inside the train he tore into fine bits the ticket marked "Washington."

There was a wait of several minutes, and then the Midwestern Limited slid from the smoky cavern of the train shed out into a starlit summer night. Faster and faster it went, past long stretches of box cars, past factories and warehouses, the great structures of the city, dim in the night, gradually fading into the lowly habitations that border the tracks. Then came the open fields and black patches of woods.

The great Equitable Bank robbery had become an accomplished fact, and Bruce Lanseer was a fugitive, fleeing into the new world he had built in his dreams.

St. Louis was to be his first stop—after that, let Fate decide. Somewhere "out West," he decided. As it happened, it was to be in Valehaven, a town in the State of Washington, where the fugitive was to begin life again.

Hod Allister leaned expectantly over the desk in the Central House as the bus drove up from the nine-thirty-three. The Central was Valehaven's leading hotel, and Hod, who was known as Horace to his mother, was the day clerk. The hotel door swung open, and the product of the nine-thirty-three walked in—one man carrying a traveling bag. He was a young man, not particularly prosperous looking, but dressed nicely and carrying an unmistakable air of having been in several places bigger than Valehaven. Hod, who was somewhat of a dresser himself, was quick to notice the nifty cut of the stranger's clothes, and, what particularly pleased him, the very latest thing in collars, the long points of which reached well down upon the wearer's shirt bosom. This was the first collar of that style to find its way into Valehaven, and Hod instantly de-

cided to send to Spokane for a dozen of them.

"Howdy, stranger," Hod thus saluted, handing a pen to the newcomer in the approved manner of hotel clerks.

"How are you, sir?" the stranger responded in a tired voice, setting down on the register the name and description: "John Dallman, Boston, Massachusetts."

He inquired about the location of the express office, and then said he would go directly to his room. Hod was anxious about the collar.

"That looks like the latest thing in collars you got on, stranger," he said. "Excuse me for noticin' it, but good clo'es don't hit this town very often. You wouldn't mind tellin' me the name of it, would you?"

"I'd be glad to do that," Dallman said, "but I've forgotten it. I'll let you know some time later in the day. I'll have to look at it in the room."

"I wish you'd do that, and I'd thank you," Hod went on. "We fellows here that wants to dress well have to send to Spokane for the real article. We get our ideas from the travelin' men, and then buy our stuff a hundred miles away. Before we get it some new style comes in, and we're always a couple of laps behind."

Dallman's trunk had been brought in by this time, and he followed it to the room. Once alone there, he sank wearily into a chair—haggard and tired, plainly a man who had lost much sleep.

Lanseer, or, rather, "Dallman," as we probably shall find it more convenient to take up with him the new name, in planning the Equitable robbery had failed to take into consideration the transformation a man's soul undergoes in the commission of a crime. It was quite a different thing to plan as a man yet unhindered by the weight of an unlawful act than it was to execute those plans as a fugitive. Life, people, the things about him, were thrown upon the screen of his vision in a stranger light. So long as the thing had been undone, there had been no mistrust, no fear, of those about him. Now that it had been accom-

plished, his viewpoint was that of the fugitive. Gradually the million fingers of suspicion had barbed him. He was fleeing, and all the world was in pursuit.

Like the little boy in the dark, who, becoming frightened at imaginary perils, starts to run, and whose terror increases as his speed increases, so was Dallman. Each new city he entered, and he bobbed about the country constantly, held new horrors for him. People on trains seemed to look upon him in a suspicious manner. Each sound in the hallways of hotels threw him into terror, for he was sure the hand of the law soon would be upon his door. He kept expressing the suit case ahead of him, never quite daring to carry it about as ordinary baggage. At every corner he expected to be pounced upon. Every time he saw a policeman he waited patiently for the man to nab him. Of course, when he reasoned more coolly, he knew that arrest was quite unlikely because he had left an absolutely blind trail. But nevertheless he was a fugitive, and a fugitive has a different viewpoint than other folks.

The chief cause of the fugitive's unrest of mind was the fact that never a word of the crime had been printed in the newspapers. He knew enough about such things to realize the value of the story to the papers all over the country. A hundred-thousand-dollar bank robbery is not an everyday occurrence. Faithfully did he watch the papers, but never a word. This placed him more in the dark than ever. If he had been able to glean an idea from the papers as to what the police were doing, where they were looking for him, speculation as to where he had gone, or what he had done with the money, this would have eased his distraught mind; would have made the chase more or less of an open event. As it was, he knew not in which direction to flee; he knew not from which direction to fend an impending blow; he knew not at which corner he would be descended upon; he knew not where to turn.

In his moments of clearer reasoning, Dallman could understand quite well the reason the papers had not gotten onto the story. He knew that banks, particularly the big ones, had no desire to advertise the thefts that took place within their organizations. He knew that from the outset an effort would be made to keep the crime away from the newspapers. This effort in his case apparently had been successful. But he also knew that the desire to avoid publicity would not abate the search. In a general way, he knew of the ramifications of the great national-banking secret-service system; he knew how its tentacles, reaching out through all the country and into unknown corners of the world, if necessary, swept the earth and drew in nearly every one of the bigger offenders against the law. He knew how, by secret methods, this system engaged the police of the country in a *quiet* search. Because nothing was being said about him, that was no indication that they were not searching, hunting, trailing, and some day probably would swoop down.

John Dallman acted quite differently than Bruce Lanseer had planned. He did not proceed as coolly and as surely about the business of running away as had been intended. He dodged nervously about the country, seeking peace of mind first one place and then another, until he was in full flight. Unpleasant though it was, he knew he was another man not only in name, but in fact. He realized that he had burned all bridges between his past and his future. There was a deep and wide chasm separating him now from all that period of life prior to a few days before. His life henceforth must be lived, he knew, with no tie to old associations. There had risen instead of Bruce Lanseer another man, named by an alias, and the old name was one to avoid, one to keep forever silent. Within the space of two minutes he had passed from a man possessing about three thousand dollars to vast wealth, but somehow he had not planned on such a complete disassociation with the past. His three thousand

dollars had come into his hands honestly, through saving and from insurance left by his parents, and it was vastly different from the one hundred thousand dollars. The dreams of pleasures which the fortune would buy, dreams that had floated before him for many weeks, were not so refreshing now. He could not buy those pleasures, he found, for to do so would reveal his financial status. He could not take this fortune and go about the country having a general good time, for such a procedure meant arrest, and arrest meant prison for a good many years. His fears made him cautious; he was afraid to drink. He sanely realized that he must keep a clear head.

He must make new friends—find a new home. It had been his original intention to buy an automobile somewhere in the Middle West and to travel by easy stages into the Northwest, where he would pick out some likely spot to hide for a year, surrounding himself with all the conveniences and luxuries that a fortune could buy. Now he knew this would attract attention. He must proceed quietly, unostentatiously. In Denver he studied a map of the great Northwest, and quite casually his eye lighted upon the name Valehaven. The letters applied to a mere pinpoint of a dot far up in the North, but it seemed to be set in a great range of mountains, walled about and away from the world he would escape. He would go there quietly and establish some modest business.

The idea of a gent's furnishing store, sown in his mind by Hod Allister, took form in Dallman's mind as he sat in his room at the Central House, gathering his wits for some sort of action to establish himself. The investment would not be large; he could swing the proposition without opening the one-hundred-thousand-dollar suit case, he was sure.

That is how the Dallman Haberdashery came to be established in Valehaven. The proprietor, John Dallman, soon became a popular business man of the town, and prosperous. He lived at the Central House, and on a shelf

in a closet off his room, far up out of sight, and wrapped up in papers and tied with rope, was the suit case containing the stolen fortune, unopened. The longer it remained thus, the more fearful it became to its possessor.

To love and to be loved in return, instead of providing the glorious source of joy that such a situation usually holds for youth, overcast the life of John Dallman with gloom. Her name was Mary Ansell, and she was a school-teacher. It came within the first year of Dallman's residence in Valehaven, and when he realized that he had met *the* woman, his first feelings were of happiness; then despair. Words were unnecessary between these two young people. Each knew what was in the heart of the other. Many times he told himself he would break off this hopeless affair, and just as often was his inability to do so impressed upon him. At times he thought he would dispose of his business and flee from Mary—for her own sake—and then he would realize with all the force of his love that he hadn't the strength to do that. He clung, hopeless though it seemed, until his tortured mind began to cast about for light—for some possible way to atone for the past and to realize the better thing.

Two years he had now been in Valehaven, and he had recovered his self-possession long ago. As the days went by he came to believe with all the vigor of his earliest reasoning that arrest was highly improbable. He knew his trail was absolutely blind. Had not love come to him probably he would have been content to live on in this way, but love had come and would not be denied. He knew the weight of his crime was made more burdensome by the weight of hopeless love.

He called one evening at the home of Mary's aunt, where the girl lived, and there was a grim light in his eye.

"I want you to take a walk with me," he told her; "a long walk. I've something I want to say to you."

She had been waiting a year for him to say *something*, and her first thought

was that the time had come, but there was a ring in his voice that didn't sound exactly as though words of love were on his tongue.

"Just a moment," she said simply, and soon she came from the house with a light wrap about her shoulders.

They walked down through the old arbor, where they had walked many times before—the old arbor beside the rambling river that nature seemed to have grown for the purposes of lovers. The pathway was arched over with a bower of branches, and the light within was soft and mellow.

"First I want to tell you that—we must forget—I must forget, I mean—my love," he said evenly enough, though a little bluntly.

Girls like to be told of love, but not with such grimness. She caught her breath quickly, but said nothing.

"I've been selfish, unreasonable, in staying here," he went on, speaking with warm reproach for himself now. "I should have left here long ago—but I couldn't bring myself to do it. I'm weak—I'm not a *man*! There's only one excuse I can plead—my—love for you."

Those were sweet words to Mary, but the manner in which they had come portended something of a tragedy; they seemed to spell misery for her.

"Why, John, what is the matter?" she asked, and there was fright in her voice.

She didn't think it necessary to tell him she returned his love. He hadn't asked her to do that. Maybe he knew, just as she knew. They were standing still now, facing each other in the hazy light of the arbor.

"I'm not fit to be here with you!" he burst out. "If you knew the truth, you would fly away from me—and hate me!"

"I would not," she said quietly. "I would not. Tell me the *truth*; maybe I can help. I have known—have felt—that there was something, and I think you ought to tell *me*."

"I am a thief!" he said suddenly, standing squarely before her and seeming to expect her to dash from him.

"I am a thief! There—I'm glad it's over with. Now don't you hate me?"

"No."

"Well, I am," he went on desperately. "I stole one hundred thousand dollars, and they're after me now. I'm liable to arrest any time, and you must not see me any more. You must not see me again—for I am a thief!"

"I don't believe it," she said firmly.

But he convinced her. He told her the whole miserable story. He shaded no detail that would tell against him. He seemed to make an especial effort to emphasize his own ignoble action. He seemed to be trying to drive her away from him.

"When are you going to—to take it back?" she asked.

"Going to take it back! Going to take it back?" he repeated slowly, wonderingly. "I had thought of that, but there was always that prison staring me in the face."

"But, of course, you must take it back. Maybe it won't be so hard on you as you think."

She could not let him go that night without telling of her own love. She told it simply, without faltering. It was in her heart, and would not be cast out now. He waited, silent, until she was done, feasting upon now the beauty of her soul as well as the beauty of her physical self. A courage had come to him, but he dared not leave this girl until he had shown her the impossible situation into which their love had placed them.

"Even if I take it back, and they let me go scot-free," he said, "you can't marry a thief, Mary. In any event, we must forget each other."

"Why, John, or *Bruce*," she exclaimed half laughingly, "you're not a thief! If you had been, you'd have opened that suit case. It's been a test for you. It's proved your conscience to be the strongest thing about you. You're not a thief; no, you've proved yourself to be far from it, and that makes me love you—all the more."

And so, when he left for New York with the stolen fortune, Lanseer carried in his heart the promise of the girl to

come to him as soon as he was free—even if the time were to be measured in days or in years.

Hillman Towle was seated at his desk in his private office when Ganzy, one of the tellers, told him, with a trace of excitement, that Bruce Lanseer was in the outer office and would like to see him.

"Show him in," Towle said.

"I'm glad to see you, Lanseer," the cashier said, as the door closed behind Ganzy.

"I'm glad to see you, too," Lanseer said earnestly. He got a ray of hope from the smile that was on Towle's face. "I've come back to pay my debt—and whatever penalty you think I ought to pay."

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about that," the cashier said, as unconcerned as though a one-hundred-thousand-dollar robbery wasn't involved in this proceeding.

Lanseer dropped the suit case into a chair close to Towle's hand.

"There it is," he announced grimly, "just as it was the day I left the bank."

The bank official surveyed the suit case casually.

"I wouldn't let it worry you," he said. "It was a mere trifle. I replaced it—as soon as I discovered it was gone."

"You—replaced—it; as—soon—as—you—missed—it!"

"Yes; it didn't amount to anything."

Towle was smiling as though he enjoyed the situation. "Do you mean to say you haven't opened that suit case since you took it out of the bank?" he asked, now serious and incredulous.

"I have never opened it. I have never had the courage."

"Well, you'd better open it."

Lanseer pulled a key ring from his pocket, and his nervous fingers finally selected a small key. He fitted it into the lock on the suit case, but it would

not open it. He fumbled at the key ring again.

"I'm afraid I've lost the key," he said.

"I don't think you ever had the key to *that* suit case," Towle said. "I'll have it opened."

In a few minutes Towle had obtained a screw driver from somewhere in the bank, and with that helped the agitated Lanseer to pry off the lock of the suit case.

Then there lay spread out before the gaze of the two men—Towle's tennis outfit!

Lanseer sank into a chair. His brain was in a whirl. Slowly that day came back to him, and he saw it all. While he had been in the vault, Joe, the colored porter, had mixed the two suit cases, and placed the wrong one under the counter! The cases were remarkably similar; only the closest scrutiny could detect the difference.

"I found your suit case," Towle said, "and was glad, for your sake, that things happened as they did. From what you tell me, I guess it's kept you straight for two years, and I know you will never attempt such a thing again."

"What are you going to do with me?" Lanseer asked, still in a daze.

"Do with you? I don't think I want to prosecute a man for stealing an old tennis suit!"

Lanseer stepped into the street a changed man. By degrees his self-composure returned, and he found himself looking without fear into the faces of the people about him. He felt the old spirit of Lanseer returning and the false personality of the alias Dallman slipping from him. Much to his surprise, he found himself gazing without a quiver into the eyes of a big policeman. He half smiled, and realized that he again was back in the company of his fellow man.

"God, but it's great to be *free* again!" he breathed.

The Annihilator

By Walter M. Darburg

The country needs men like this young scientist who risks his job in the Bureau of Inventions in order to experiment with a new war machine. It is a look into the future, with a picture of actual warfare in these United States

EMERSON BOYD was one of the younger engineers of the Edison Company. At the age of twenty-eight he knew more about electricity than many of the Edison experts. Day after day he experimented with this unknown force. If he gave a thought to the wage scale or the eight-hour law, no one knew it. He had found his work, and he liked it. He would sit for hours, surrounded by humming motors and singing wires, scarcely moving a muscle. At other times he would be found in the laboratory, apparently trying to electrify every element known to the chemist.

One day, while testing out a new and complex electrical device, there was an explosion. The chief engineer, about to enter the building, saw the massive doors buckle inward and fall.

He rushed into the testing room, which was filled with an almost invisible vapor. The floor was covered with tools, wire, broken glass, and damaged apparatus. An odor of burned wood and clothing filled the air. Boyd was stretched on the floor some distance from the carriage track. His face and hands were burned, his eyebrows gone. He gazed dazedly at his chief, Brownlee. The engineer assisted Boyd to his feet, and was relieved to see that the young man could walk. He suggested that they call the company physician, but Boyd apparently did not hear him, for he walked over to the conveying platform and began fumbling with the machine that a few minutes before had been working with smooth precision. Suddenly he glanced up and leaned

slightly forward, as if trying to catch some far-away sound. The chief engineer noticed for the first time that every motor in the room was silent. When he mentioned short circuit, Boyd stared at him and shook his head. Presently he faced his chief. "Mr. Brownlee, I can't figure it out. I was standing in the middle of the room, watching this infernal thing. It was working perfectly. I turned to shut off the power when—well, I don't know just what happened. I felt a shock." Again Boyd turned and gazed about the room. "I don't know what caused it. I do know I am burning up. Let's get out of here. But whatever you do, Brownlee, don't let any one touch a thing in this room. Something unusual has happened, and I want to figure it out."

Boyd's face and hands were badly burned. The flesh seemed to be baked. Doctor Yates was baffled and alarmed, and later pleasantly surprised to see the injuries yield so quickly to treatment. Boyd's hearing was completely restored in a few days. He brightened up, and seemed to take an interest in things.

Later, when Boyd returned to the testing room and surveyed the cluttered floor, and saw the massive steel frame of the skylight at his feet, twisted into a thousand shapes, he spoke aloud, as if trying to assure himself that he was alive. On the west side of the room the long series of small windows, with multicolored panes, were completely destroyed. The July sun was shining in upon the wreckage. An investiga-

tion showed that none of the framework of the windows or skylight had fallen on the *outside* of the building.

"Some explosion!" muttered Boyd to himself. "Every blooming thing came in and down toward the middle of the room."

He prowled about the building for several days in search of a clew, but without result. One afternoon he was sitting on the conveying platform, fumbling a few pieces of colored glass. Chief Brownlee entered. At the sound of his voice, the glass fell from Boyd's hand. He stared at Brownlee and smiled.

"I think you had better drop your investigation for a while," said Brownlee. "It's like trying to find a penny to make a set of books balance. You'll figure it out some day, and—well, I came over to talk about another matter. I just received a telegram from Washington, asking if we could furnish the lately established bureau of inventions with a first-class electrical engineer who has a full knowledge of chemistry. You are the man for the place, and——"

"But," interposed Boyd, "I——"

"Yes, I understand," said Brownlee, "but it's your chance. You can investigate this thing later. If you don't like it at Washington, drop me a line. We'll have a place for you."

Boyd picked up an oil can that was on the conveying platform, and gathered up the bits of colored glass, which he placed in his locker. He would experiment at leisure with the filtering of light rays through colored glass—possibly the cause of the recent explosion.

He reached Washington in a rather cheerful mood. Professor Dallyham, chief of the bureau of inventions, asked Boyd many pertinent questions, and finally told him that while he was quite young for the place he would give him a chance. "Your name will be entered to-day as one of my assistants. There is nothing needing attention at the moment. You may report Monday, nine o'clock." And Boyd was dismissed with a nod.

The next day Boyd chanced to pick

up a copy of the *Washington Post* in the lobby of the National Hotel. He was startled to see his name, in block letters, double column, on the front page:

Another Step Forward.
Emerson Boyd,
Electrical Wizard of the Age,
Named First Assistant
In the Bureau of Inventions.

Boyd's face turned red as he hurriedly scanned the article that followed. He shook his head as he read it again. His lips tightened. "Huh! Whipping the world again—on paper!"

Monday morning Boyd had the pleasure of waiting on the outside of the laboratory building until the janitor appeared.

An assistant finally showed him through the laboratories, leaving him at room Y with the remark: "This is your department. Make yourself at home, Mr. Boyd. Oh, yes, here are your keys."

Boyd entered. If he had had any preconceived notion of his workshop, his ideas were immediately revolutionized. He found a rather indifferently stocked laboratory. Much of the equipment in motors and electrical devices, while new, was of old type, with minor improvements that added but little to its efficiency. "Gosh!" he exclaimed, as he peered over a five-foot oak partition, beyond which was a lavishly furnished office. He stepped round and dropped into a large leather chair. As he surveyed the costly and comfortable furnishings he wondered whether he had come to Washington to work or to enjoy a luxurious ease. If he was to work, he would like to get at it. Possibly he would find somebody in the hall. He opened the door. In the act of closing it again he read:

MR. EMERSON BOYD

Private

KEEP OUT

"I didn't notice that on the door when I came in," he soliloquized. "Well, nobody has disturbed me so far." He glanced at his watch—ten-forty-five.

Presently a bell buzzed. A clerk entered and proffered him a large envelope.

"From Professor Dallyham."

Boyd was informed that certain electrical apparatus used on the latest type of submersible was giving constant trouble, and that several serious accidents had resulted. Various apparent defects were pointed out. He was instructed to experiment and make such alterations as he thought necessary. He was quickly convinced that the device was impracticable. It would be easier to design something new. He asked for an interview with Professor Dallyham, but was told that he must wait until Wednesday.

When Boyd advised the professor to abandon the plan of altering the device that worthy gentleman flew into a rage. Boyd was there to follow instructions—not to give advice. "If you are anything of an engineer, you can alter the machine and make it serviceable. We haven't time to waste on experiments. It is up to us to improve the present machinery—make it workable. If we do this, we will keep up with the times."

For several months Boyd did nothing but design alterations for antiquated machinery. The bureau was a wheel within a wheel. Several times work had been tied up for weeks while waiting for instructions from the navy or some other department.

Boyd, however, was never idle. He had fitted up a small laboratory in his apartments. The cause of the explosion at the Edison plant became his chief concern.

One day Professor Dallyham called at room Y. It was his third visit since Boyd's arrival. Boyd happened to mention that he believed he had discovered a new element, highly explosive in character. The professor seemed irritated.

"How many times have I had occasion to write you that you were not here to waste your time experimenting? Nothing can come of it. The sooner you realize the importance of

following instructions the better it will be, and——"

"You'll get somebody else to follow your antiquated instructions," broke in Boyd. "I resign."

"You don't mean that, Boyd! We need you here. We need patriotic men. Each of us must give up something for the common good."

"Exactly, Dallyham, and for that very reason I'm going to quit. I am not allowed to experiment or to spend any time in the chemical laboratory. I am young—a dreamer in your eyes. Several of the foreign countries are way ahead of us in the use of chemicals and electricity. The interviews you have published concerning the great advances being made here are pure bunk, and you know it. The nation shall have my services, but not as an ordinary repair man. War may come any day. Are we prepared? You needn't answer. Some day when this nation rocks beneath your feet, you'll think of what I have said. And if you don't, it won't matter much."

A few days later Boyd went to Chicago, where he called on his friend Brownlee. He briefly rehearsed the trouble he had had at Washington, and informed Brownlee that he was leaving shortly for the Ozarks to make some experiments. "I think I have partially solved the cause of that explosion in the testing room," said Boyd. "If I am right about it, and it comes to war—well, I'll have something to say."

"But why go way out there, Boyd? Stay here. Everything in the Edison plant is at your disposal."

"Thanks, Brownlee, but if I should be on the right track something is going to happen. I don't want to wipe Chicago off the map. No, I must locate out in the mountains miles from a habitation."

Three weeks later, Boyd, ascending the rugged and woody slopes of a short divide, stopped and refilled his canteen from a small stream that wound along a course of polished granite. The divide, for some three hundred level feet, was blanketed in emerald green. A

lone pine near the edge of the miniature plateau seemed to challenge his coming. North and south, mighty hills blotted out a possible vista.

Below Boyd were unknown cañon depths brimmed with aspen, oak, and pine. One of the larger cañons, opening westward, disclosed green valleys and gentle, flowered slopes—the land of the Flaming Sun. About him in the sunset the granite was turning to purple and gold. The scream of an eagle startled him. His gaze followed the great bird's graceful flight across the cañon.

"Big country!" he exclaimed as he faced the west. "My country!" And as the cañon seemed to echo "My country!" Boyd smiled.

At the foot of the divide, Boyd stroked his pony's nose and swung into the saddle.

It took some time to install his equipment on the divide, as he laboriously packed his material up the slope without other help. Near the abrupt cliffs, to the north, he built a two-roomed cabin. This completed, he stripped the limbs from two sparlike pines. These naked trees were to serve as masts for his wireless station, which, as he wrote Brownlee, would be company for him, and at the same time keep him in touch with the pulse of humanity on land and sea.

He located his shop near the lone pine. Day after day he experimented, building and tearing down, to build again. He installed a small laboratory in the cabin, and spent hours compounding chemicals which he frequently subjected to intense electrical heat. He was searching for an electrical force that would spring from chemical reaction of some sort hitherto undiscovered. Would he find it? And if he did, would he live to use it?

Returning hurriedly to the cabin one morning, he dropped into a chair and began going over a chaos of symbols on a yellow slip. He forgot to eat. Later he went to the shop and worked till midnight on a double-barreled mechanism that suggested an aeroplane gun. In a few days he had mounted

this strange, gunlike machine on a small tower just outside the door.

Two cylindrical-shaped tanks were set up in the shop and connected by insulated wires to the machine outside. A coil of heavy wire was inserted in each of the metal cylinders, and these connected to a small motor. One cylinder he filled with chemicals; the other was apparently empty. He started the gasoline engine, and speeded up the motor. Suddenly he threw the control switch. One of the gunlike tubes hissed. Far out in the cañon a tiny cloud formed. Boyd threw the switch back to neutral with a clash, and pressed a button on the other tube. Almost instantly there was a deep, far detonation, and the cloud disappeared. He removed his rubber gloves and rubbed his face. His dog, Tige, looked wonderingly at him. "Too close for comfort, old boy," said Boyd, as he reached down and patted the shaggy head.

Boyd experimented incessantly for another month. The small tower was replaced by a heavy twenty-foot structure, upon which was mounted a carriage supporting two cannonlike tubes. The tubes were directly connected by heavy wires to two tall cylinders in the shop. His original apparatus, not much more than a working model, was now replaced by a full-sized machine.

Early one morning the cañons echoed the staccato explosions of a high-powered gas engine. Boyd filled one of the cylinders with a reddish substance and the other with a bluish and lighter chemical. He screwed down the heavy cylinder caps, turned on a switch, glanced at the engine, and then strode out and mounted the tower. Elevating the tubes slightly, he pulled a lever, and the muzzles of the tubes swung to an angle of fifteen degrees, toward the crest of a hill about five miles away.

"Guess that will do," he muttered.

He pushed a lever downward, and smiled as he saw a dial hand swing round to the figure five, and then hang there. In another instant he had turned a switch, and one of the tubes began hissing, like an uncapped gas well, as a high-voltage current went streaming

into space. Presently a blue vapor enveloped the crest of the hill. As the tube launched its silent, subtle power, the hill crest was smothered in heavy cloud. Boyd's fingers rested on a trigger attached to the other tube. He pulled the trigger. A stream of blue flame shot forth. Instantly the heavy cloud on the hill crest disappeared. Then came the thunder of a mighty explosion that shook the earth for miles as it echoed and reëchoed through the cañon. Through his glass Boyd saw that the trees on the hill crest had been stripped, many of them shattered and uprooted.

That night he was restless. The solitude of the hills burdened him. He could not sleep.

He had discovered two new and strange electrical forces, but to make his discovery useful would necessitate incalculable effort. The cumbersome machinery of his first experiment would be impracticable for general use.

The next day Boyd resolved to rest, but toward evening he could not resist the temptation to set the machinery in motion and turn his strange guns toward the valley. Aided by his glass he saw a cloud form, settle earthward, then suddenly disappear. A faint echo, like distant thunder, drifted up to his lonely station.

Down in the valley, some twenty miles away, Rebus Washington was homeward bound with a load of cedar wood. Rebus dozed while his team, a mule and horse, stumbled along the road. To this day Rebus insists that a hand reached out from heaven and lifted him from the wagon, dashing him to the ground. A Roman charioteer couldn't have competed with Rebus as he swung down the street at Hobbs Center, shouting and goading the team. Curious villagers, following a trail of cedar wood, turned a corner just in time to see the team crash into the rail fence at the Washington cabin. Jed Hopkins met Mrs. Washington hurriedly emerging from the cabin, carrying a baby and dragging little George by his kinky hair.

"Oh, Mistar Jed," she cried, "my ol' man's done gone clean crazy. He's in dar a-carryin' on, an' Ah don' know what he says."

When Rebus had been somewhat quieted, he related his strange experience in the cedars.

Jake Hobbs assured him nobody's hand from heaven had touched him.

"It was jus' summer lightnin'," chimed in Jed Hopkins. "We all hern it thunder aback thar in the hills."

The next morning the Widow Brown was surprised to find a grubbing hoe that had been missing for months on her back stoop. And Hiram Reece was doubly astonished to see a big, yellow rooster, that had been gone for a week, flapping its wings in his front yard.

For several days distant rumblings had been heard by the folk at Hobbs Center, but no one gave it concern but Rebus Washington, who stayed close to his cabin.

One afternoon the quiet of the village was shattered by a detonation that rocked buildings as though they were in the grip of a mighty earthquake.

That night Rebus drove away with his family.

A week later half the population of Hobbs Center had moved into town, with strange tales for those who would listen.

The Associated Press correspondent at Joplin sent out an uncanny story of seismic disturbances, and soon reporters and scientists were examining the earth and rocks and gazing into a cloudless sky at Hobbs Center. The first arrivals saw nothing strange and heard nothing unusual, unless it was the wild stories of the village folk, which but served to breed contention among the scientists.

It remained for Boyd's old friend, Professor Dallyham, and Professor Whipple to get firsthand information of what had been happening at Hobbs Center. They had been there but an hour. Dallyham was complaining of the heat and glaring sunlight, when suddenly his protestations were cut short. The earth trembled, and his

mind momentarily went blank as a thunderous crash shook the village.

Professor Whipple, while advancing possible reasons for the phenomena, was frank to say he didn't know anything about it. On the other hand, Dallyham insisted that it resulted primarily from the proximity of the sun to some mineralized planet, which superinduced a disintegration of atmospheric elements.

A black cat was now the sole inhabitant of Hobbs Center. The press of the country struck a normal gait again, and the thrice-told tale from the village at the foot of the Ozarks became a closed incident.

Boyd slowly opened his eyes and gazed blankly at the sky, wondering how long he had been lying there.

He remembered falling from the tower, but that was all. He twitched nervously as he tried to move his hand to his aching head. His hands were held down by a cover tucked about him. As he turned and raised on one elbow, he found that his head was tightly bandaged. He tugged at the cover and tried to get up.

"Perhaps you are not strong enough yet?"

Boyd sat up with a jerk, and his lips parted as he gazed inquiringly at a blue-eyed girl.

"I was picking flowers down by the stream," she continued, "when I heard a dog howling piteously. It frightened me at first, and then I had an impulse to find out what it meant. I hurried up here, and found you crumpled up at the foot of that thing. Really I'm afraid your head is badly cut. You look fearfully used up."

"My name is Boyd—Emerson Boyd," announced the young engineer, as he staggered to his feet and proffered his hand to the young woman.

"I am Betty Thomas. We are camping—father and I—down near the big spring."

Boyd appeared to be deeply concerned. Conflicting emotions surged through him. The thought that his

whereabouts might become generally known filled him with consternation. Success depended upon secrecy. Miss Thomas was the first to speak again:

"You must come down and see us, Mr. Boyd. Father will be glad to meet you."

"Thank you," said Boyd, "but just now I can hardly go. I really——"

The girl's eyes seemed to seek an explanation.

"Now that you have found me by accident, I might as well tell you," he continued, "why I'm here and what all this apparatus means. I am staking everything on the success of my efforts. I know you will treat what I tell you as confidential."

The girl tried to understand as the young engineer briefly told her of his difficulties, his hopes, and his fears. As he mentioned the electrical guns, he touched lightly upon the measure of his success.

The girl rose to go, and held out her hand. "No one shall know," she said. And Boyd felt that he could trust her.

The following afternoon Boyd found it difficult to focus his mind on his work.

Presently there came a tap on the shop-room door. Instantly Boyd was on his feet.

"Why, Miss Thomas!"

"Please don't think I'm overbold, Mr. Boyd," she interposed. "I remember what you said about this being forbidden land, but I felt uneasy about you—then I wanted to let you know that we are leaving to-morrow."

He expressed disappointment, and before she left he told her more concerning his efforts; the difficulty he was having in simplifying the equipment and making it portable.

"Why don't you rig it up on an automobile truck?" she exclaimed. "Wouldn't that do?"

"The very thing!" he cried. "Power, means of transportation—everything! Your suggestion will make it possible for me to leave here soon. And it won't be long before we'll have our secret running on four wheels."

Boyd continued his experiments on the divide for several days. On one occasion the vaporizing current had broken but a short distance from him, sending its countless sparks in every direction and forming a cloud dangerously close. Before many days he discovered the cause for this; a defect in the current control. This adjusted, he felt that his work on the divide was at an end. He dismantled the machinery, packed up what he intended shipping, and destroyed the rest.

On reaching Chicago, early in October, he arranged an immediate conference with his old friend Brownlee. To him he related the result of the experiments and his plan to use an automobile of special design in the building of the war machine. As he told Brownlee, it would be impossible to interest the government without having a demonstrating equipment complete, and even then it would be a difficult matter. To build it would take considerable money, and he had no idea where he could get it. Brownlee quickly set his mind at ease.

"I'll take care of the money end, boy. You go ahead and perfect your machine. We must push this thing through. The country is facing a critical state of affairs. Our foreign trade is about gone, and we'll have to do something soon. Things don't look too bright, with official Washington asleep."

And Brownlee was right.

Following the termination of hostilities in Europe, international trade conditions had become completely upset. The mere severance of diplomatic relations with Germany had availed the United States nothing. America stood on the outside looking in when the new alignment was made. England, France, Russia, and Japan secretly formed a trade alliance. America's commerce gradually fell off in Europe and the Far East. True, American merchantmen had the freedom of the seas, and no nation had even hinted that they couldn't trade where they pleased. The doors were open, but nobody would buy, and many factories had closed

down. Despite increasing trade with South America, additional factories gave up the losing fight for existence during the winter of 1922. Hundreds of thousands of hungry men walked the streets, clamoring for work. The efforts of the government to secure trade concessions were fruitless.

Suddenly a million throats cried: "War!" But with whom? American ships went unmolested. Citizens abroad were treated with courtesy. And in event of war, was America ready?

The work of preparedness, pushed feverishly for a time, had been practically abandoned. The pigeon-hearted wrung their hands and cried: "What shall we do?"

Just at this juncture the United States was invited by England to send commissioners to a conference at London for the purpose of adjusting trade differences.

Congress adjourned to await the outcome of the London conference.

When it was announced a few weeks later that there would be no further discrimination against American products in the foreign markets the people breathed freely again. Manufacturing plants were reopened, and once more peace anthems were heard in the land. And again, over bitter opposition, army and navy bills were shelved.

The following year, Congress, worrying along in special session, took a recess for the holidays. Elaborate preparations had been made to celebrate the return of prosperity.

New Year's Eve the cabinet was suddenly called together. With staggering abruptness, Japan demanded the annulment of the anti-alien land laws and the repeal of the Asiatic exclusion acts. The note was short and crisp. America's time for reply was limited to thirty days. There was no intimation what Japan would do if the United States did not accede to her demands.

Just at this critical moment a sharp controversy broke out between Russia and England over alleged violations of trade agreements. A rupture between the two powers seemed imminent.

Messages to congressmen sent them

hurrying back to Washington. The two houses convened in secret joint session to discuss Japan's obvious threat. There could be but one answer, and that—war.

Battleships were rushed into dry dock for repairs. Work was speeded up on the few ships in the course of construction. America's mobile land forces were soon marking time under sealed orders. A strict censorship was placed on all means of communication. Uncle Sam was not going to be caught napping.

If Japan declared war, it would be after receipt of America's answer at Tokyo, and then it would be several days, possibly two weeks, before her first-line ships would touch the Pacific coast. Our fleet would be there to meet them. So reasoned our guardians at Washington.

Women and children were leaving the coast cities by the thousands.

Suddenly Japanese residents began disappearing from the coast and inland points. Later it was reported that they were streaming through Calexico into Mexico by hundreds, and the California pulse began beating with more regularity.

The efforts of our department of state to secure additional time within which to answer the demands of Japan were unavailing, and at three o'clock p. m., January 30th, the reply of our government was handed to Ambassador Yamado.

A few minutes later Ambassador Yamado appeared at the office of Secretary of State Bronson and handed him a formal declaration of war, which had evidently been in his possession for some time. Yamado was given his passports. The following bulletin staggered official Washington:

A state of war is hereby declared to exist between the Imperial Government of Japan and the Government of the United States of America and its Insular Possessions, as of date, January 10, 1923.

Orders began flying thick and fast. At four o'clock all efforts to communicate with the Honolulu and Philippine cable and wireless stations failed.

Two divisions of the Atlantic fleet, anchored off Colón, were ordered into the Pacific. The dreadnaught *New Mexico*, four destroyers, and two battle cruisers got through the canal before enemy dirigibles wrecked the triple locks at Gatun, closing the gate to the Pacific.

Twenty seagoing submarines on the West coast were on their way to join the American fleet one hundred and fifty miles at sea. Troop trains, fighting snow and ice, were crawling westward through the darkness.

No word came from the fleet as the hours passed, and apparently all was well. Had we known that Japanese cruisers, from which flew monster, magnetic kites, made it impossible for our ships to receive or send a message, we would have felt differently.

Just after midnight a flash came from San Francisco, stating that the rumble of heavy gun fire was drifting in from the sea. That was the last message from the coast, until a seaplane dropped at Yuma, Arizona, that morning at eleven o'clock, bearing a message that stunned the nation. During the night a Japanese army had landed. Monster submarines and semisubmersible transports, with oval, armored decks, had poured a veritable yellow horde into California.

At dawn immense alien armies sprang out of the mist at Santa Barbara and Monterey. Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland had been captured. The lower coast forts, except those at San Diego, had been taken.

Japanese, emerging from hiding places during the night, had quietly and speedily destroyed sections of all railways leading into Oregon, Nevada, and Arizona.

No one knew how many yellow men had come ashore.

Army after army, which had landed at Ensenada, Mexico, was reported to be pushing across the border into the Imperial Valley.

Nothing had been heard from the tiny American fleet at sea.

General O'Bryne had lost four thou-

sand men trying to save Oakland, but the yellow horde finally forced his small army back to Stockton.

Divisions of the enemy were hurrying inland, and spreading up and down the coast.

This first message sobered the American people. The playground of America had been taken.

Army movements were changed, and it was planned to strike the foe with two converging forces and sweep him off his feet before a second expedition could arrive from Japan.

At dusk a biplane reached Reno, Nevada, and, confirming the first message, brought additional information: that the enemy had massed an army at Tehachapi Pass; that another force was sweeping past Sacramento.

As the days swiftly passed the American troops vainly tried to eject the foe from the gateways to California. A surprise attack from land and sea had put the invaders in possession of Portland, Oregon.

Mexico suddenly shot an army across the undefended borders of Arizona and New Mexico. Along the Texas border a hungry army of Mexicans, reinforced by three Japanese divisions, appeared overnight, and were marking time on the banks of the Rio Grande.

The United States set about to raise a large army. It was apparent the Japs were contented with holding the coast States.

On the water, our small Pacific fleet had been practically wiped out, but with a greater cost to the enemy. From the beginning Japan had avoided all naval engagements when possible. To engage her ships, we had to run them down when we could or break through a circle of submarines and semisubmersibles. Our electrically controlled aerial torpedoes would hold to their courses for a while and then suddenly shoot high into the air, where they exploded harmlessly.

Our Atlantic fleet was now in Pacific waters. It was watched by enemy craft toward land, and a powerful armada at sea. What would be the outcome?

The day that Japan's declaration of war was published found Boyd in possession of one completed and tested machine, and two others nearing completion. They appeared to be nothing more than high-powered roadsters of unusual size.

Boyd hurried to Washington on the first train, seeking to lay his discovery before the proper officials. He was first told to see Major General Swoop, of the general staff. The general's aide-camp informed Boyd he would have to go to the secretary of war *at this time* with matters pertaining to inventions to be used by the army.

It was nearly three weeks before Boyd was able to see Dallyham, now secretary of war, and then it was only because he was more insistent than the two guards at the door of Dallyham's office.

Dallyham became impatient when Boyd asserted what he could do.

"You are as crazy as ever!" he exclaimed. "It's impossible!"

Boyd cut in with a question: "Were you ever at Hobbs Center?"

Dallyham sat up with a jerk. "Hobbs Center!" he exclaimed. "What do you know about that?"

"Everything," answered the other slowly.

"Impossible! Impossible!" muttered Dallyham as he sank back in his chair.

"Yes," continued Boyd, "and that isn't all. If you don't test my invention—give me a chance—I'll do something on my own account. I need the cooperation of the army, but I can get along without it. It's up to you."

Dallyham probably wouldn't have gone to Chicago to test the electrical gun had he known that Boyd had determined to give him some more first-hand information about disintegration of atmospheric elements.

The secretary of war accompanied Boyd to Chicago. The next day, at a lonely spot on the shore of Lake Michigan, Dallyham received a practical and convincing demonstration of the power of the new gun.

The following night three monster, drab-colored automobiles were run

aboard flat cars, made secure, and quickly covered with canvas. A few minutes later a special train stole out into the darkness, speeding westward.

After a record run the special arrived at Needles. Boyd lost no time in bearing a sealed message to the general in command on the border.

"Huh!" grunted the officer as he read the dispatch. "This thing is hardly intelligible. What in thunder——"

"I guessed it would be, general," interrupted Boyd. "I am here to furnish that, if I may. I'll explain and demonstrate at the same time, with your permission."

In the hills north of Needles, it took Boyd but a few minutes to release the long, disappearing hood covering the rear of the roadster, raise the collapsible steel tower supporting the electrical guns, and then give the general a satisfactory demonstration, and incidentally send a shiver through the distant reserve camp.

Later the roadster was loaded on the flat car again, and the special was run in on another siding, where a strong guard was placed around the white-robed engines of destruction.

The wires between the camp at Needles and Washington were busy far into the night.

The strain on Boyd during the past few weeks was beginning to show. The general ordered the young engineer to bed at an early hour.

Brownlee, who had accompanied Boyd, was left to confer with the general and his staff in working out plans to meet the new situation. Boyd was greatly pleased next morning when he heard that immediate action was contemplated. Brownlee was to take one of the machines to Reno, and, if possible, open up the passes leading to Sacramento. Boyd was to take the other two by rail to the reserve camp at Barstow, which was as far as the railroad could operate. One machine was to go south from there and open the way to San Bernardino; the other was to cover Tehachapi Pass.

Nightfall found Boyd at Kramer, west of Barstow, where more of our

reserves were stationed under command of General Green. The other machine, operated by the electrician, Phillips, one of Boyd's assistants, was waiting a short distance south of Barstow, ready to move under cover of darkness.

The general's orders were that Boyd should go to a certain point on the main line of the Santa Fe that night. He told him the artillery would begin shelling the enemy at daybreak, and continue until eleven o'clock, the hour set for Boyd to begin operations. The infantry and cavalry would move forward from all reserve camps during the night, and it was hoped that when daylight came the enemy air scouts would get the idea we were going to attack.

Next morning the deep-throated roar of cannon and the shattering crash of bursting shells intermingled in a continuous and horrible monody. A smoky veil hung low in the mountain passes and on the desert. By ten o'clock the enemy had brought up a large number of reserves at Tehachapi and Summitt Switch. A little later our cavalry and infantry began to advance. Our gunfire ceased. The batteries of the enemy became silent, and as the smoke of the batteries lifted along the pass it swirled and twisted, commingling with a gigantic cloud that grew in size and density as it rolled earthward.

Suddenly there was a blinding, white flash—a shattering detonation. The earth rocked and trembled as the thundering vibrations died away.

Our troops moved forward on the double-quick, and, as they went, Boyd, lengthened the viperous tongues of the destroyer, and blotted out thousands of the retreating yellow horde.

Boyd was grimly silent that morning as he adjusted the destroyer's machinery and got his bearings. As the thunder of the first explosion rumbled to his distant station on the desert, all color went from his face, and momentarily he put his hand over his eyes, as if to shut out the vision of death and destruction wrought by his hand.

It was an hour later before our apprehensive cavalry reached the zone of the first explosion. Thousands of the

enemy had been literally annihilated. Burned and mangled fragments of humanity were strewn over the devastated land. Large craters were all but filled with countless, shapeless dead. The rocks and earth glared with sanguinary black.

The destroyer had left no living thing within the vast radius of its power.

The energy of our forces in cleaning up and consolidating their positions on the Pass was wasted.

For several miles down the slope west of Tehachapi the waiting armies of the foe were staggered by the distant explosions. The supernatural power reaching out from the sky and clutching at their throats robbed them of reason, and they turned and fled.

The two destroyers operated by Brownlee and Phillips were equally effective, and night found our troops holding the bloodstained passes leading to San Bernardino, Bakersfield, and Sacramento, and the enemy trying to reorganize his men.

Our officers and men were dazed by the result of this first terrifying demonstration. It was uncanny—appalling.

During the advance of the next few days it was impossible for our troops to keep up with the venomous tongues of Boyd's destroyers. Aided by air scouts, he wiped out—regiment after

regiment of the invaders, and sent those who escaped reeling toward the coast.

On and on thundered the grim destroyers, annihilating desultory regiments, blotting out abandoned villages, and rocking the towers of steel and stone.

Those who escaped the death clouds threw away their arms and fled into the coast cities, terrifying and disorganizing their own forces of occupation. Our citizens, at first stunned by the strange turn of events, finally awakened, fell upon the crazed invaders, and drove them toward the setting sun.

Off San Diego harbor, an enemy fleet, attempting to wreak vengeance, had their flaming guns enveloped by death clouds that formed silently, settled, and burst, sending the steel-clad ships into a voiceless oblivion.

A month, and we had snatched our coast country from the talons of the yellow horde. Such ships as escaped destruction were locked in our harbors. The maimed and ragged remnant of a once powerful army stood facing the sea.

Boyd, weary, horrified by the devastation of his own hand, applied for leave of absence.

"Just how many men share this secret with you?" asked the general.

"None," said Boyd. "But there is a girl in Chicago —"

The general smiled.

A New Novel by J. Frank Davis

Author of "Garland: Ranger Service"

THE PLOT AT QUERIDA

THE story of the building of a great dam in the land of little water. An ex-Ranger is the thinking machine in the multi-million-dollar enterprise in South Texas, which was endangered by a group of financial pirates.

Complete in the May 20th POPULAR.

A Chat With You

EVERY now and then some one accuses us of evading our responsibilities and failing to rise to our opportunities. "THE POPULAR is an interesting magazine," they say, "and amusing. But it defers too much to the popular taste and prejudice. It is afraid to come out and call a spade a spade. It dodges the real issues of life in its fiction. There are sides of life it does not show us."

As a matter of fact, we are not in the least afraid of calling a spade a spade. We do it—or, rather, our authors do it for us—in every issue more or less. The point is they do it with such urbanity and good taste that no one is offended or shocked. As for the "sides of life" that we do not show them we know well enough what they mean. We do actually try to show all sides. We show them, however, to the best of our ability in sane proportion, as they appear to the average, normal American.



WE know well enough that there are men and women who go astray. You will find them in THE POPULAR, as elsewhere. What we are free from, we hope, is a morbid interest in immorality for its own sake. Since Ibsen was translated into English there has been a whole literature of fiction devoted to human weakness, depravity, disease, and disaster. A study of this may be called facing the facts of life, but we think it nothing of the kind. The real facts of life are the struggles and achievements

of human beings. We are not trying to put a veil over anything unpleasant. We admit the evil with the good, but we think that the good magic is the stronger. What we try to avoid is the unpleasant way of looking at unpleasant things. Novels whose real interest depends upon the appeal to a morbid and prying curiosity are advertised as moral lessons, as solemn warnings. The path toward moral and mental strength has its analogy in the physical plane. You don't get physical health and strength by studying the horrible examples in an old-fashioned quack medical museum. They are found rather in the open air, in that bigger and healthier world, where we can see the sound wholesomeness and sanity of Nature herself, and realize the mighty and steady urge of Nature toward growth and betterment. There is no hypocrisy in this attitude. We admit cheerfully—or sorrowfully, perhaps—that there are weaklings and villains enough. We have them in THE POPULAR. You will find a choice collection in that wonderful mystery story of H. B. Marriott Watson's, "The Excelsior," which starts in the present issue. It isn't the association with these people we object to. It's the way we regard them that makes the difference.



IF you take pencil and paper and try to sketch faces from memory you will discover at once that it is much easier to give a convincing presentment

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

of an ugly thing than of a beautiful one. A man with a deformity or a badly broken nose may be drawn so that any one will recognize him. It is a good deal harder to draw a pretty girl. Similarly it is easy to write these ugly books. We could fill a magazine with grim tragedies and dreamy salacities at one-twentieth the cost and effort that goes into every number of *THE POPULAR*. Off-color stories are easy to contrive. They are the most primitive form of wit. You can hear them in barrooms and dives, from the lips of men who utterly lack the power to conceive or execute a wholesomely interesting story. There are people who still have a sneaking liking for the things that used to pass for amusement in the Dark Ages, just as a well-bred dog sometimes wants to roll in the mud. We think more of them, however, if they are frank about it instead of striving to disguise the thing as a moral lesson or a serious study of life.

AS a matter of fact, we have always been for action rather than introspection, and we think the majority of Americans are of the same habit of mind. The picture that Charles Burr gives us of the big guns and fighting men of the battleship in his story, "In Turret Number 3," in the next issue of the magazine is more use to us than the dreams of Baudelaire or the confessions of George Moore. A story like that of J. Frank Davis, "The Plot at Querida," the complete novel which opens the next issue, has about it an honesty, a vigor, a manliness, unpretentious perhaps, but really a better help to living than nar-

ratives of the shady affairs of shady ladies. Comfort's new Chinese story, "Gobi," with all its touch of the exotic, is a true and honest picture of scenes and people. And there is plenty of really vigorous humor in Fullerton's tale, "Number 601 of the Light Brigade."



WHAT we really object to about the self-styled realists and moralists is not that they give us pictures of erring people, but that they give us pictures of nothing else. Every one who has any sense at all knows that the great majority of fairly successful people are trying as hard to be decent as they know how. Pauline may have some awfully close calls in the movies, but it does not convince us for a minute that a girl can't walk down the street without danger of abduction or white slavery or whatever you call it. Rich men are not as a class sinister hounds on the trail of feminine innocence and beauty. Generally they are too busy working or playing golf. Life, in this country at least, is not in the least like Ibsen or Zola, and no writing will make it so. You will find here as good a picture of the four corners of the U. S. A. and the people in them as you are likely to find anywhere. And if we have none of the morbid sensations that are to be found elsewhere it is not in the least because we are afraid of calling a spade a spade, or because we refuse to face the facts of life. It is because we see life with eyes unjaundiced at least. It is because we see the whole of it, and not one sordid corner. It is because we find on the whole that the good far outweighs the bad.

THE MILLIONS YET TO BE MADE

Biggest Fortunes in the Automobile Industry Still to be Earned
An Industrial Story That Reads Like a Romance of Fiction

WRITER SEES GREATEST OPPORTUNITY IN THE FUTURE

EDITOR'S NOTE.—The following article on the possibilities of a car selling for what is known in automobile circles as a "popular price" is well worthy of the thoughtful consideration of our readers. The statements made here have been most carefully analyzed and every effort has been made to verify them. To the best of our knowledge they are accurate and conservative. The possibilities of a car of the high quality and individual character of the Crow-Elkhart as set forth here are evidently most attractive.

THOMAS P. HALLOCK,
General Manager Motor Mechanics.

(Reprinted by permission from *Motor Mechanics*)

THE world's BIGGEST FORTUNES have been made by filling a REAL WANT. The industrial opportunities are GREATER TODAY than EVER before. More enormous fortunes have been piled up in the last ten years than in any other corresponding period of time in the history of the world.

It is the age of GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES.

The GREATEST industrial opportunity today is the AUTOMOBILE.

The BIGGEST automobile industrial opportunity today is the POPULAR PRICED car of quality and general appeal—GENERAL because appealing to the greatest number of buyers.

COLOSSAL FORTUNES have been made in the last ten years in building POPULAR PRICED automobiles, and, according to Henry Ford, the greatest era of the popular priced car is still to come.

Ford started a dozen years ago with a capital of \$28,000. Today it is reported that Mr. Ford has REFUSED \$200,000,000 for his business.

John Willys took the tottering Overland Company, put \$33,000 into it and today the

Overland Company represents a \$40,000,000 investment.

The Dodge, the Saxon, the Maxwell, the Buick, the Chevrolet are all cars in this wonderful class that have earned PHENOMENAL FORTUNES.

Yet there is today a BIGGER OPPORTUNITY in the popular priced field than ANY of these.

To fully understand WHY this is the case let us consider a few FACTS.

Consider These Facts

What is the tendency in the automobile field today?

IT IS TOWARDS INDIVIDUALITY.

It is all towards the car of DISTINCTIVE appearance.

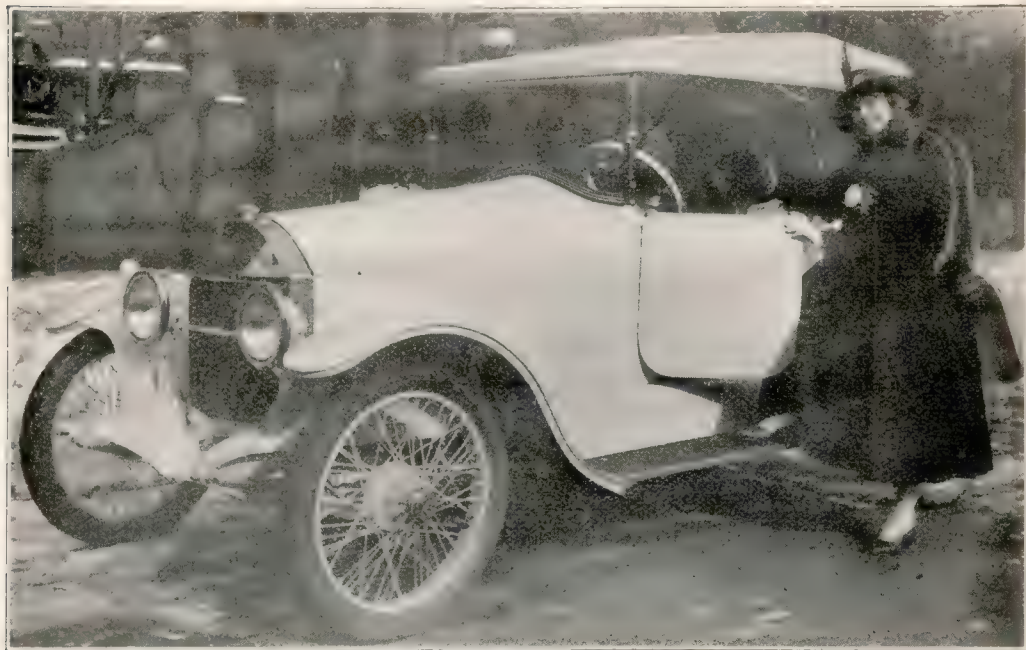
The wealthy man pays from \$10,000 to \$20,000 for an imported Rolls-Royce, Lancia, Isotta-Fraschini, Daimler or Fiat car BECAUSE he gets an INDIVIDUAL CAR OF DISTINCTIVE TYPE and appearance. Others, not quite so wealthy but still able to satisfy the desire for an EXCLUSIVE TYPE OF CAR pay up to \$10,000 for an American made Crane-Simplex, a special Pierce-Arrow, a unique Win-

ton or Loco. He too wants a DIFFERENT CAR.

The man of moderate means, however, the man who can't afford to invest beyond \$1,000 for a car, has had to satisfy the de-

wonderful car I am going to tell you about and for which it is not hard to predict THE GREATEST FUTURE of any popular priced car on the market.

I have just returned from visiting a won-



The Beautiful Multi-Powered Crow-Elkhart "Clover Leaf" Roadster. Note the Elegance of the Model.

sire for motoring pleasures by buying a one-type, one-color, one-style car that looks as though it had been stamped out by some giant machine.

The POPULAR PRICED car buyer would LIKE to get INDIVIDUALITY, character and style in the car that he buys BUT HE HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO—UNTIL NOW.

He hates the cars that all look as though they had been dipped into one color vat—as many of these cars are—until they all look alike but UP TO NOW he had to be content with such a car OR DO WITHOUT.

Individuality—the Need of the Hour

TODAY, the man who wants INDIVIDUALITY, class and style, combined with HIGH QUALITY, can find it in this

derful factory where this car is being manufactured.

I have seen what looks like the greatest FORTUNE-MAKING POSSIBILITY of the times.

I have seen a car produced of such extraordinary merits mechanically that I doubt whether there is any car selling for twice the money that can equal it.

I have seen this car built on lines of wonderful beauty, grace and elegance; finished in a dozen beautiful color schemes and combinations—blue, red, battleship gray, crimson, black, etc. I have seen models of such "classy" refinement of lines and finish and of such mechanical perfection as I had believed possible only in the highest priced cars. And this is in a car selling for less than \$900.

I have seen positive evidence that this car has established itself so FIRMLY in popular favor that today it is no longer

a question of whether the car will sell. **IT IS SELLING FASTER—MUCH FASTER—THAN THE MAKERS CAN SUPPLY THE DEMAND.**

I have seen sheafs of telegrams, letters, orders all asking for **MORE CARS**. I have seen letters from dealers far and wide urging the manufacturers to give them **MORE CARS**.

I have seen this factory straining every nerve and exerting every atom of power to increase production to equal demand.

IF THERE EVER WAS A FORTUNE IN SIGHT, IT IS IN THIS CAR.

Here is the Great Opportunity

Consider these **IMPORTANT POINTS**:

Here is a car selling for less than \$900 that has an engine in it with features of excellence found **ONLY IN A FEW** of the **MORE** expensive cars.

Here is a car with an exquisitely modeled body built on the finest yacht lines in two fine models—a touring car and a roadster.

Here is a car selling for less than \$900 which offers you any of a dozen beautiful **COLOR COMBINATIONS** to choose from.

tial the chassis that there is hardly any appreciable difference in vibration when going at sixty miles an hour than when dawdling along at fifteen miles an hour.

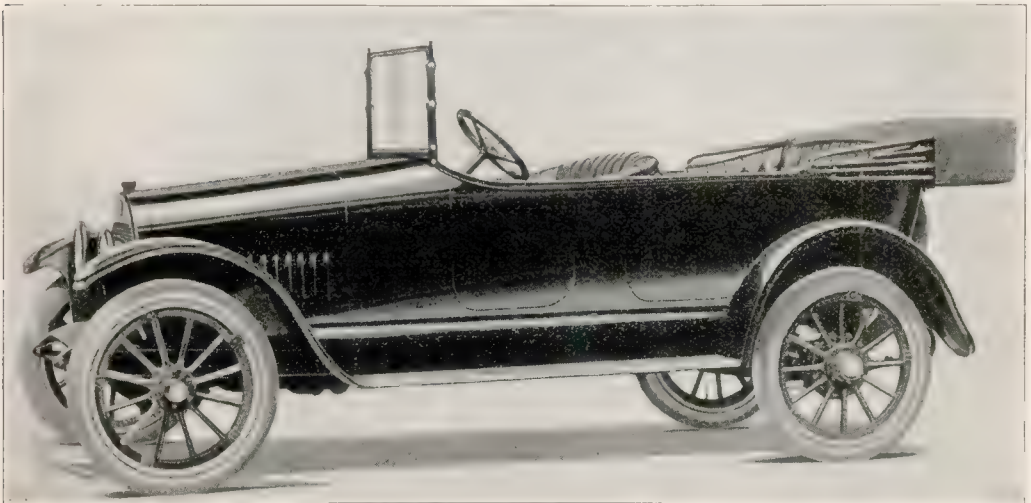
NOW do you **WONDER** why this car selling for less than \$900 looks like the biggest **FORTUNE-BUILDER** of any automobile proposition before the people?

If Ford, to-day, is turning out 800,000 **CARS A YEAR**—which it is said is the present Ford output—what do you suppose could be the output of such a car as I have tried to describe to you, once the factory capacity of this company is made capable of meeting the market demand?

Today this factory is straining every nerve to turn out a few more than 20 cars a day. With increased factory capacity equal to the demand already existing and on a basis of the growth in demand that is inevitable who can say what the limit of its possibilities may be?

One Million Cars a Year

With a daily capacity of only 25 cars a day today it is a little hard to jump in imagination to a possible production of 100,000 cars a year, but it is no harder a jump to make than it was to imagine a few years ago that Henry Ford would reach a pro-



Crow-Elkhart, five Passenger Touring Car; "The Multi-Powered Car."

Here is a car with a **SPEED**—which is equalled by only **A FEW** of the **HIGHER PRICED CARS**. It can deliver **SIXTY MILES AN HOUR SPEED**, and so perfect is the engine balance and so substan-

duction of **1,000,000 CARS A YEAR**, the output which he is said to have predicted that his company will produce next year—in 1918.

Had Ford told any one six years ago that

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

in that short space of time he would be producing that enormous number of cars he would have been laughed at as an insane man. Today we marvel and BELIEVE.

Ford's million cars a year ONLY CONFIRMS the belief in the enormous possibilities offered by this car which I have seen in the making.

The automobile industry is STILL IN ITS INFANCY, say automobile experts.

THERE ARE TEN MILLION POSSIBLE AUTOMOBILE BUYERS IN THE U. S., say statisticians.

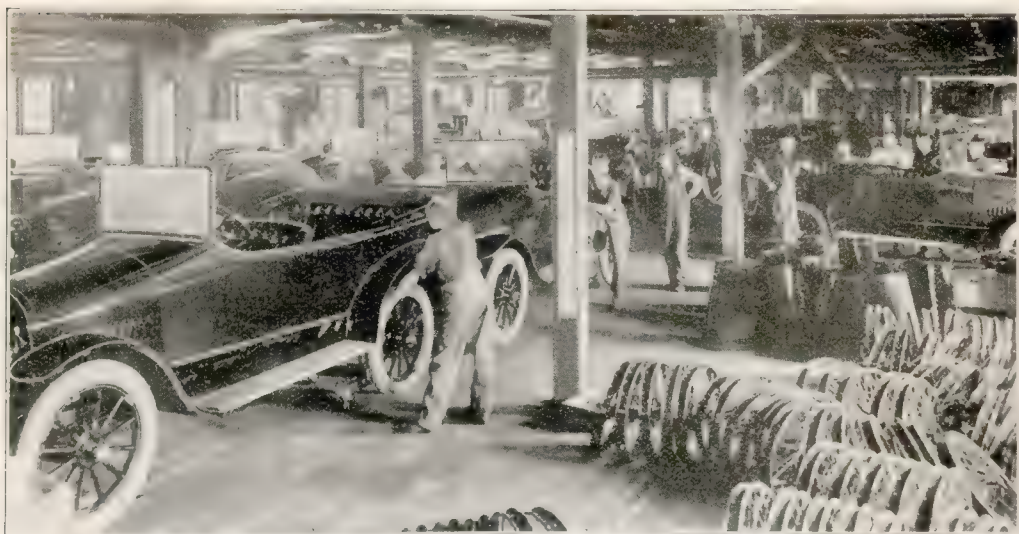
Today there are less than three million automobiles in use in the U. S. and it is said that less than one million persons each own

The Car Success of the Age

The MULTI-POWERED CROW-ELKHART CAR is NEW, comparatively speaking. It has grown from nothing into the automobile sensation of the times.

It is ALL the things I have said for it AND MORE.

The story of the CROW-ELKHART CAR reads like a romance. It IS a romance, a romance of INDUSTRY; a romance of the fascinating possibilities the industrial world offers to our people today; a romance with a most wonderful FUTURE—for its future has yet to be written. It is being written TODAY. It is being written all over the country, all over



Section of Final Assembly Floor, Where Wheels, Horns, Lamps, etc., Are Added.

a single car—the balance are mostly owned by big corporations, taxi cab companies, etc.

The GREAT MASS of the NEW BUYERS will be buyers of POPULAR PRICED CARS, and they will be men and women DEMANDING MORE and better QUALITY for their money than to-day's buyers.

With such a market, with the SPLENDID QUALITY and salability of this car, with the INDIVIDUALITY it offers, is it remarkable that one should predict such a brilliant FUTURE for this car I saw in the making?

What is this wonderful car, you will ask?

THE CAR IS THE NOW FAMOUS CROW-ELKHART — "THE MULTI-POWERED CAR."

the world. And it is being written in characters of GOLD.

The Story of M. E. Crow

Seven years ago Mr. M. E. Crow, a successful automobile engineer and production expert, was offered an opportunity to build an order of cars for a jobber who felt he had a market for a certain type of cars. Mr. Crow had recently severed his connection with an automobile manufacturing concern and was looking around for a chance to get into the manufacturing business for himself.

Mr. Crow had a limited amount of money. His father, Dr. E. C. Crow, a well known physician of Elkhart, Indiana; also had a few thousand that he was ready to

invest. Father and son organized the Crow Motor Car Company, which was later re-organized as the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company.

Mr. Crow rented a vacant factory building on Main Street in Elkhart, Indiana, and with a balance of a few thousand dollars in the bank, a flat top desk and a bag of tools started in business.

From that humble beginning has grown the splendid Crow-Elkhart enterprise of today, with its wonderful product and its great success.

The contract job of cars was built and delivered. They have nothing to do with

successful men. He combines these various qualities, so essential to success, in a high degree.

During these months Mr. Crow matured his plans for the CROW-ELKHART CAR.

He started with AN IDEA, that fruitful source of so many big fortunes. And he has seen his idea blossom out into one of the biggest successes in the automobile field.

HIS BIG IDEA, concretely expressed, was to develop a type of QUALITY CAR that could be sold for between \$800 and \$900. A car that had all the mechanical



Assembling Floor where the Bodies are Placed on the Chassis.

this story, except that they were the means of launching the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company.

Developing an Ideal Car

During the months Mr. Crow put in on the contract job he did a lot of thinking on the IDEAL POPULAR PRICED CAR he had had in mind for a long time.

Like every normal American, Mr. Crow wanted to achieve success. Like many of his fellow-citizens, Mr. Crow has BRAINS, training and AGGRESSIVE ENERGY. Indeed, if I were to paint the man for you I could find no word or set of words that would paint him to you more thoroughly. He has the terrific DRIVING FORCE that is the principal characteristic of all

perfection that a fruitful, resourceful engineering mind could produce, and that in design and beauty of finish and appointments would rival its more expensive competitors.

What the Crow-Elkhart Car Is

It took a long time to develop this IDEAL CAR.

It took a lot of educated BRAIN matter to develop such an engine as Mr. Crow had in mind. Here are the requirements he set:

A "Fool-Proof" engine that a child or woman could drive.

An ECONOMICAL engine that would save gasoline and oil costs.

A SIMPLE engine that would require few and those easy-to-make repairs.

A POWERFUL engine that would drive

the car at SPEED enough to satisfy the American desire for speed.

A FLEXIBLE engine that would be

touring car and a roadster—are DISTINCTIVE and ELEGANT. The full stream-line yacht bodies are full of grace.



Chassis Assembling Department of the Crow-Elkhart Plant.

easy to regulate and that would be responsive in the "pinches" at high or low speed. An engine with a quick and easy pick-up.

Always a staunch believer in the four-cylinder engine, Mr. Crow and his engine builders worked to develop a high speed type of four-cylinder engine that would meet his high requirements.

It has been the contention of Mr. Crow, and of many other good automobile engineers, that the IDEAL MOTOR is the "FOUR." He believes that had the same amount of brain power been invested in perfecting and refining the "Four" that has been put into developing the sixes, eights and double sixes that the "Four" would be greater than any multiple cylinder engine made. Mr. Crow points to the fact that nearly all the engines used in racing cars are "Fours."

Best Value on the Market

Today the Multi-Powered Crow-Elkhart is acknowledged to be the BIGGEST VALUE of ANY CAR selling for less than \$1,000.

It has ALL THE QUALITIES which Mr. Crow planned for it—AND MORE.

In design it is just what the word "CLASSY" implies. Its two models—a

And to add to the *individual character* of the car the MULTI-POWERED CROW-ELKHART can be had in a dozen different beautiful COLOR COMBINATIONS. Quite a difference from the one-type, one model, one color cars of other makes.

In mechanical quality it has no superior in its price class for STURDY RELIABILITY—perhaps no equal. The company's slogan, "THE MULTI-POWERED CAR," conveys vaguely the superior and surplus power of the wonderful CROW-ELKHART MOTOR.

One feature alone of the engineering equipment of the CROW-ELKHART was found only in a LIMITED NUMBER of the HIGH PRICED CARS until adopted by the CROW-ELKHART. I say that this feature was in a "limited number" of HIGH PRICED CARS, simply to be on the safe side, but I only know of one high priced car whose engineers accomplished this great achievement. This great feature is the CROW-ELKHART COUNTER-BALANCED CRANKSHAFT. To the average lay mind this combination of words does not express anything in particular. To the automobile engineer it means much.

As this feature is one of the BIGGEST SELLING POINTS of the CROW-ELK-

HART it may be well to explain in what way the **COUNTERBALANCED CRANKSHAFT** contributes to the efficiency of the modern motor car.

The Crow-Elkhart's Supremacy.

The **COUNTERBALANCED CRANKSHAFT** does away with friction, vibration and loss of power. Here is the way Mr. Crow describes it in a recent circular:

It gives me great pleasure to report that Crow-Elkhart Motor Company has installed in its cars the recently perfected Counterbalanced Crankshaft and that we are the first manufacturers to adopt this revolutionary improvement in cars selling under \$1,000. I can announce positively that the Crow-Elkhart Counterbalanced Crankshaft adds at least 35% extra power to the 5-passenger Crow-Elkhart Touring Car and our 3-passenger "clover-leaf" roadster.

This marvelous new discovery, a permanent feature of our product, not only adds 35 per cent to the power of the Crow-Elkhart motor in a smooth, "silky" unbroken stream, but greatly increases riding comfort and ease of control.

You can now travel 60 miles an hour in a Multi-Powered Crow-Elkhart car with

Wins Fame and Fortune

The **CROW-ELKHART** car is winning **FAME** and success from one end of the country to the other. **IT HAS ARRIVED.**

During the New York and Chicago Auto Shows it was one of the most admired of all cars shown. Experienced autoists marveled at the beauty of lines and the mechanical perfection the cars displayed. Dealers everywhere asked for a chance to represent the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company and sell the handsome and efficient Crow-Elkhart cars. Orders poured in at the factory. The universal cry was not alone "Can I sell your car?" but "HOW SOON can you deliver me twenty, forty, eighty, one hundred cars?"

"I can sell Crow-Elkhart cars as fast as you can supply them," urged dealers in all sections of the country.

There is no doubt about the **SUCCESS** of the car. The **CROW-ELKHART IS A POSITIVE AND UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS.**

Mr. Crow's theory has been **VINDICATED.** **IT IS ONLY A QUESTION NOW OF HOW SOON CAN THE FAC-**



Body Metaling Department of the Crow-Elkhart Plant.

no more perceptible sense of speed than if you were going 15 miles an hour. The result of the Counterbalanced Crankshaft's action is to eliminate friction, cut down vibration and prevent needless wear and tear on the bearings and other parts.

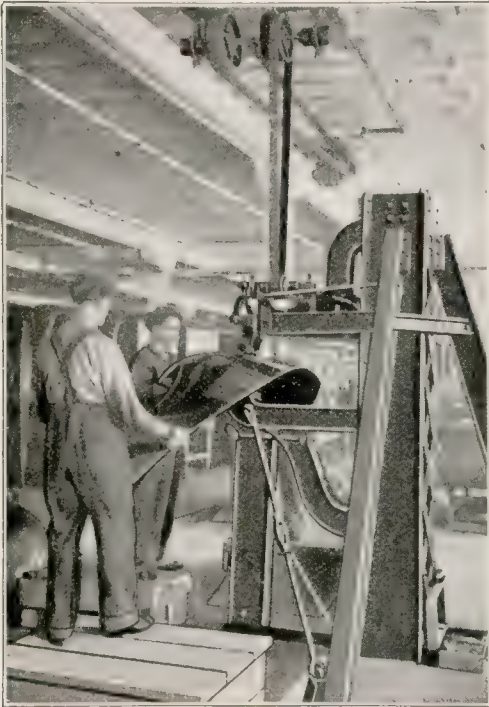
TORY CAPACITY OF THE CROW-ELKHART MOTOR COMPANY BE ENLARGED SUFFICIENTLY TO MEET THE EVER GROWING TIDE OF ORDERS.

Birthplace of the Crow-Elkhart

The CROW-ELKHART factory is located at Elkhart, Indiana, a live and thriving city of about 25,000 people in Northwestern Indiana, near the Michigan line.

Starting originally with a small shop the factory now spreads over the landscape in a straggling aggregation of buildings which have been added to and built on to as the increased demand necessitated new factory space. The latest addition is a handsome new pressed brick and Bedford stone two story Administration building which now houses the offices and salesrooms. The old offices have been taken over for additional factory space.

The present factory capacity is a little more than 20 cars a day. A few months ago it was half this. This growth has been effected by adding new space, installing new and perfected machinery, making economies of space where possible.



4-Ton Steel "Bumper" Shaping the Bodies.

Mr. Crow has set himself a proposed capacity of 30,000 cars a year to be achieved as soon as possible. Beyond that he hasn't planned YET—but the greater development

will come—it MUST COME judging by the HUNGER for this splendid car.

Building the Ideal Car

The Crow-Elkhart factory is a veritable HIVE OF INDUSTRY. It fairly HUMS with eager, thrilling ACTIVITY.

A trip through the factory is interesting because it DEMONSTRATES the REAL REASON FOR CROW-ELKHART SUCCESS.

Passing beyond the old offices which are now the store rooms one sees the great accumulations of material, raw and manufactured, which awaits the builders. Here are stored probably \$400,000 to \$500,000 worth of material, much of it bought when prices were MUCH LOWER than now. Some of this material has increased over 300% in cost.

You then step into the factory proper. The first department is the chassis section, a long, wide space devoted to the assembling of the chassis. Here on trucks are the sturdy steel frames, around which hustle alert mechanics fitting in parts, rivetting them together, installing the engines and rivetting on the supports for the lamps, running boards, body, etc.

You pass through this department and enter the body department. Here great sheets of blue steel are fed into the cutting machines and stamped out into the sections that compose the body. Rivetters and solderers put the sections together and then they are hammered by a huge electrical "Bumper" into the beautiful curves of the Multi-Powered Crow-Elkhart. It is a place of much noise. Here too are shaped and finished the fenders.

Building for Strength

Everywhere you will observe with interest how strongly and efficiently every part is built up into the powerful, beautiful complete car.

Beyond the body department is the wood-working shop. Here the big rough planks of seasoned and selected lumber enter at one end and go right to the mill that saws them into required sizes and shapes. These are then finished and turned over to the joiners who build them into the wooden frame that supports the body. Here too strength is combined with grace and elegance.

The finished frames are then placed in the steel outer body and solidly combined into one homogeneous part. The body is now ready for painting and goes to the

The Acid Test of Quality

Hitherto the car has traveled its early career on a truck, but now it is run off the truck into an elevator and carried down to



Shipping Platform at the Crow-Elkhart Plant.

floor above on elevators. Here it is first primed with a coat of filler which is rubbed smooth and then painted. The various coats of paint are rubbed down and then the body goes to the varnishers who varnish and rub until the body has the polish of the finest piano finish. From here it goes to the upholsterers who put in the deep, over-stuffed upholstery covered with different leathers according to the specifications.

The body is then put on the chassis and securely attached and turned over to the finishers. These put on the wheels that are already painted and tired—wire or wood artillery wheels as required—then the engine is connected up with batteries and self-starter, with the gasoline tank, etc. Dial board connections are made, the horn, lamps and other accessories installed and connected up and the car is ready to go out of the factory. Before leaving inspectors pass on every part, test everything about it and the car is finally tagged and sent to the testers.

the ground floor, where it is pushed out into the yard and its reservoirs of oil, gasoline and water filled. A mechanic steps in, the self-starter is touched and the car goes forth on its own power, a thing of beauty and of life.

The mechanic turns the car over to the tester. A young chauffeur in leathern coat and cap takes the wheel with experienced hands, there is a shrill honking of the new horn, and the car dashes out of the yard for a long spin over the hills and through the valleys, over rough roads and smooth boulevards, hitting high speed and low, under all and every condition that will establish beyond even a question of doubt whether the car is ready to give service.

As soon as the tester pronounces the car PERFECT he puts his O. K. on the car and it is driven into the store house to await shipment.

There are many other fascinating departments of the factory that this cursory trip does not mention. There is, for instance, the ENGINE TESTING room. Here, in-

stalled side by side on benches, are dozens of motors purring gently along under their own power. An eagle eyed mechanic watches them and a still more alert foreman watches the watchers. The Crow-Elkhart Multi-Powered engines are given a genuine try-out before being installed in the chassis. They have to run a certain number of hours under their own power without showing any weakness. If they don't they are taken back and corrected until they do run smooth. When the engine has answered all the running questions asked of it, it is FIT TO GO IN THE CROW-ELKHART CAR—NO SOONER.

Then there are machine shops where many of the small parts are made and others are machined. Here they even make screws that are needed. It is a complete and thoroughly efficient shop.

Employees are Stockholders

There is perhaps one thing that impresses the visitor to the CROW-ELKHART plant more forcibly than any other and that is the LOYALTY and willingness of the men who labor there. There is a French word that expresses it. It is "Esprit de corps," the animating SPIRIT of mutual aiming at an ideal. All seem animated by this one object. Here are men who LOVE their work and prove it by the loving care with which they accomplish their tasks.

It isn't surprising to learn that many of the employees of the company are also STOCKHOLDERS. Recently several employees were offered a substantial CASH INCREASE in salary or a BONUS of stock in the company to be delivered at a future date. They took the STOCK BONUS believing—from what they know of the company's success—that this stock bonus will eventually become infinitely more valuable than a weekly increase in earnings, payable in cash.

Financing for Development

Until last fall the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company was a close corporation, every dollar in it having been invested by President M. E. Crow, by his father, Dr. E. C. Crow, and by Mr. D. C. Thomas, secretary of the company, who was a banker until he severed his banking connections to associate himself with Mr. Crow and his father in the Crow company.

Last fall it was decided to develop the evident possibilities of the company, made possible by the great success of the Crow-

Elkhart car, and to do this it would be necessary to secure added capital for development purposes. For the purpose of securing this additional capital two methods were available. Either go to the financial powers and invite investment or go to the public and offer general investors an opportunity to join the company as stockholders and so aid in the work of development. The financial powers were sounded and were willing enough, but the price they asked was TOO HIGH. They demanded CONTROL of the company. To Mr. Crow and his associates this seemed like a ridiculously high price to pay. They did not feel like giving up all they had spent so many years, so much money and so much hard work in building up. The latter course was therefore decided on and the banking investment house of W. M. Sheridan & Co. (Inc.) was offered the chance to sell the stock.

Public Rushes to Invest

The W. M. Sheridan & Company officials made a thorough and painstaking investigation of the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company, of its officers, of its product, of its manufacturing facilities and of its market possibilities and so satisfactory was the result of this investigation that arrangements were closed to handle the stock.

The first allotment of shares was offered to the public at a fair value according to book conditions of the company. The first issue was EAGERLY SNAPPED UP. Mr. Crow promised that this money should go into improving production facilities and advertising. These promises were faithfully fulfilled. The improved machinery, the added factory space, the new administration building are PROOFS of the sincerity of purpose and intent. A later issue was placed on the market and this too was taken up quickly.

A FURTHER ALLOTMENT IS NOW OFFERED AT \$8 PER SHARE (par value \$10 per share).

The CROW-ELKHART MOTOR COMPANY is incorporated under the laws of Arizona for one million shares of the par value of \$10 per share. The shares are all COMMON STOCK, FULL PROFIT-SHARING, fully paid and NON-ASSESSABLE.

It is planned to DOUBLE the FACTORY CAPACITY as soon as possible, and then push forward speedily to the goal of 30,000 cars a year, or more. This is ab-

solutely necessary, as the company has now on hand bona fide orders for several thousand cars more than it can produce with its present factory capacity. The company

anticipated putting the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company on a dividend-paying basis by next July or August. He said:

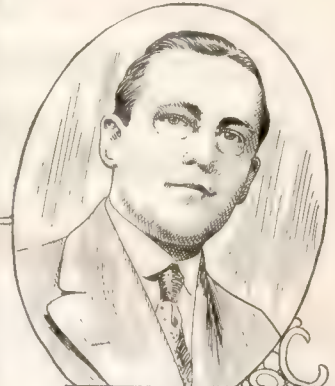
"We hope to be able to surprise you



M. E. HOSHAW
General Sales Manager



M. E. CROW
President



A. A. HANDLER
Engineer and Production Manager



D. C. THOMAS
Secretary



DR. E. C. CROW
Treasurer



I. D. LANDIS
Advertising Manager

Officers and Executives of the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company.

must double its present factory capacity AT ONCE to take care of these great orders.

The possibilities of the company are so great however that as soon as the plant capacity of the factory is increased the demand should easily absorb all the cars produced. The general sales manager has now an assured market for nearly twice the number of cars being produced.

Dividends by Next August

President Martin E. Crow, in his first report to stockholders after sale of stock was begun last October, predicted that he

with a declaration of a dividend in July or August. We don't want you to expect too much at the start, but we hope by that time to be in position to put dividends on a semi-annual or quarterly basis, and with a steady increase in the earnings to increase the dividends materially. We are not holding out promises of fabulous wealth of ridiculous proportions to be gained in a few months. We think we will be doing well to establish a regular dividend-paying basis commencing this summer. We believe that we will increase our dividend rate far beyond the expectations of most of our stockholders but we do not want to hold out unreasonable promises for big dividends in less than a

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

year after we offered our stock for public subscription. If we surprise you with larger dividends, to start with, than you expected, it will be all the more satisfactory and pleasing all around."

Here is a most startling announcement. Here is a company forecasting a dividend within less than a year of the first offering of stock to the public. If the company can go on a satisfactory dividend-paying basis by next July or August the stock should easily go to par OR BETTER and would then show a splendid return for present immediate investment.

Should this forecasted dividend materialize—AND MR. CROW HAS NOT MADE A SINGLE PREDICTION THAT HAS NOT BEEN FULFILLED—this stock at \$8 NOW is a good buy for QUICK PROFITS. Bought now at \$8 per share, if it pays dividends in a brief space of three or four months it means that THIS STOCK SHOULD BE WORTH ABOVE PAR BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR.

A Tribute to President Crow

In considering an investment it is always advisable and necessary to consider not only the PRODUCT, the PLANT, the possible PROFITS, but also the PEOPLE behind these various elements of success.

The success of the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company has been so great that it is more than ordinarily interesting to consider the men who have built it up to its success.

As in all great corporations it is largely the genius and executive ability of the MAN AT THE HEAD of the company who is responsible for its success. It is good to KNOW that your investment is being handled by CAPABLE, HONEST and STRONG MEN. Such a man is MARTIN E. CROW, President of the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company.

I have given you a glimpse of the splendid aggressiveness and intelligence of the man, of his driving force, of his genius for organization. That he has built up this fine edifice is in itself a MONUMENT to his skill and energy. HE HAS PROVED his sterling worth. But there is another side of him that has not been revealed and that is his RUGGED HONESTY, an honesty and sincerity of purpose grounded in his character from boyhood by a splendid father and a noble mother.

Perhaps no greater light can be thrown

on the character of both Mr. Crow and his father, Dr. Crow, than is shed by a letter written by an old friend who self-styles himself an "Old College Chum" of Dr. Crow, and a lifelong friend and admirer of Martin E. Crow, president of the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company.

This letter was written by Dr. F. Hollingsworth of Grand Rapids, Michigan. In it he tells of his great affection for Dr. Crow and his son and describes a scene that took place just after arrangements were concluded with W. M. Sheridan & Co. (Inc.) to place the Crow-Elkhart stock on the market. Dr. Hollingsworth says:

"As an interesting side-light on the attitude of Dr. Crow and his son towards the stockholders in the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company, permit me to refer to a conversation that occurred in my presence in the Chicago office of W. M. Sheridan & Co. (Inc.) the Investment Bankers who have the exclusive contract for underwriting the Crow-Elkhart stock.

"Dr. Crow was telling Mr. Long, Managing-Director of W. M. Sheridan & Co., of a heart to heart talk he had recently with his son. As near as I can recall it the substance of his remarks to Martin E. Crow was to this effect:

"Now, Martin, as the officers of the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company, we must always keep uppermost in our minds this one thing—we are admitting outsiders into this business and our responsibility to those who have invested their money in good faith, on the strength of their confidence in us, is a moral obligation that we must bear constantly in mind. Here-tofore, if the company met with any setback, the Crow family were the only ones to suffer loss, but now it is different, as we have others to consider as well as ourselves. We must hold that moral obligation sacred and protect and safeguard the interests of our new stockholders just as carefully as we always looked after our own welfare, and more so if possible!"

"That Dr. Crow and his son keenly feel this sense of binding personal responsibility is to me, and I believe it will be to you, a source of great satisfaction."

Dr. Hollingsworth has become a substantial stockholder in the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company.

Honest, Efficient Management

It is this HIGH CHARACTER—morally as well as from a business standpoint—that characterizes the officers of the Crow-Elkhart Motor Company that makes an investment in this stock so well worth while.

After all the success or failure of any enterprise depends largely on the character honesty and ability of the man at its head.

If he has succeeded in building up such a fine success with very limited financial facilities how much greater will be its success once he has at his disposal the necessary funds for proper development?

Once the company has been provided with facilities for building 30,000 cars a year the stock now offered below par should become enormously valuable. And when the ultimate development comes—and who can tell how great this may be?—Crow-Elkhart stock should be a veritable gold mine.

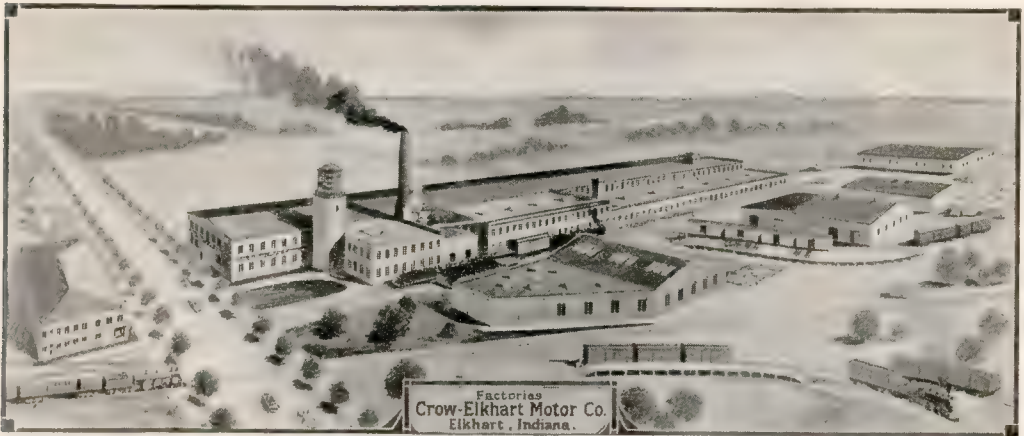
The future of the POPULAR PRICED automobile of the QUALITY and DISTINCTIVE INDIVIDUALITY of the CROW-ELKHART is particularly BRIL-

Nearly all the big fortunes in the world have been built up in this way.

Even a few hundred dollars invested EARLY in companies that have afterwards been successful have often been built up into fortunes. The automobile field has been particularly prolific in such instances.

Ford's original capital of \$28,000 is now represented by a business estimated as worth over \$200,000,000. It is said that Mr. Ford REFUSED such an offer for his business.

There are scores of instances JUST AS AMAZING of profits made in this wonderful industry in the last dozen years. And all the BIGGEST FORTUNES HAVE



Bird's-Eye View of the Crow-Elkhart Plant at Elkhart, Indiana.

LIANT. No one connected with the company imagines that the capacity of 30,000 cars a year will be the limit of the company. To predict what this may be would be futile. If the Ford company is producing 800,000 cars this year and will produce a million cars next year, who shall say that the Crow-Elkhart shall not reach a production of 100,000 or 200,000 cars a year?

Such predictions are merely a matter of personal opinion, after all, and 100,000 or 200,000 cars a year for Crow-Elkhart is not a bit impossible when we consider the Ford production of 800,000 cars this year.

Investing for Big Profits

Buying good investment stock at the LOW PRICE possible ONLY before a company has reached its development and gone on a dividend-paying basis is practically the ONLY WAY a person of limited means can hope to accumulate any substantial amount of money which may build into a fortune.

BEEN MADE IN BUILDING POPULAR PRICED CARS.

With its splendid PRODUCT, with its strong organization, with its big and growing market, with the honesty, energy and aggressiveness of the men behind it why shouldn't Crow-Elkhart grow into one of these PHENOMENAL DIVIDEND EARNERS?

Answer this question YOURSELF.

This is Your Opportunity

When you have answered it fill out the attached COUPON. Send a small payment with the coupon to RESERVE THE STOCK YOU WANT AT THE PRESENT PRICE OF \$8 PER SHARE, then investigate fully. This will insure your getting the stock you want and will protect you against an INCREASE IN PRICE, which is INEVITABLE.

By next summer this stock should be worth PAR OR OVER. If dividends are

then declared it will probably go FAR BEYOND PAR.

Such opportunities do not come often. GRASP YOURS NOW.

Seize it BEFORE YOU LOSE THE CHANCE.

REMEMBER:

Here is a MOST SUCCESSFUL PRODUCT.

HERE is a SPLENDID PLANT.

Here is a GOING CONCERN—not a dream company on paper and blueprints.

Here are HONEST, EFFICIENT OFFICERS.

Here are prospective DIVIDENDS IN SIGHT.

And here is a FUTURE so OVER-LADEN with possibilities of PROFIT that to even estimate these profits on a

cold-blooded basis invites the charge of exaggeration.

Don't Delay! Act Now!

ACT AT ONCE. Fill out the Coupon, send your first payment according to the table attached here. **MAIL IT TODAY.** This will **RESERVE YOUR STOCK** and **PROTECT YOU** against an advance in price. You then have **THREE WEEKS** (21 days) in which to investigate. If, for any reason whatever, you are not satisfied cancel your reservation and we will return your first payment. If not you can pay the balance in full or by the convenient deferred payment plan as outlined below, or you can pay cash and get the benefit, of a 2% cash discount.

BUT DON'T DELAY! ACT NOW!

NOTE—Before accepting the above announcement, I made a careful investigation of this proposition, visited the factory to see what was being done, verified statements about advance orders on hand, saw the necessity for immediate development in order to take care of the business created by the success of the Crow-Elkhart cars. I found everything just as represented above and believe this statement is carefully conservative.

F. C. ATKINSON, Advertising Representative.

HOW TO BUY CROW-ELKHART MOTOR CO. STOCK

\$ 8.00 Cash and \$ 8.00 in one month buys	2 shares, par value \$ 20.00
\$ 8.00 Cash and \$ 8.00 a month for 4 months buys	5 shares, par value \$ 50.00
\$ 16.00 Cash and \$ 16.00 a month for 4 months buys	10 shares, par value \$ 100.00
\$ 40.00 Cash and \$ 40.00 a month for 4 months buys	25 shares, par value \$ 250.00
\$ 80.00 Cash and \$ 80.00 a month for 4 months buys	50 shares, par value \$ 500.00
\$ 160.00 Cash and \$ 160.00 a month for 4 months buys	100 shares, par value \$ 1,000.00
\$ 400.00 Cash and \$ 400.00 a month for 4 months buys	250 shares, par value \$ 2,500.00
\$ 800.00 Cash and \$ 800.00 a month for 4 months buys	500 shares, par value \$ 5,000.00
\$1,600.00 Cash and \$1,600.00 a month for 4 months buys	1,000 shares, par value \$10,000.00

Other amounts in proportion.

By special arrangement, we offer a 2% cash discount to those paying for their stock in full.

Subscription For Treasury Stock Of

CROW-ELKHART MOTOR COMPANY

At \$8 per Share—Par Value \$10.00 Per Share

INSTALLMENT PAYMENT

W. M. SHERIDAN & Co. (INC.),
1105 Security Building,
Chicago, Illinois.

.....1917

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Enclosed herewith you will find remittance of \$..... to cover payment.

It is understood and agreed that I shall have 21 days in which to investigate and if not satisfied you are to return my first payment. If satisfied I can pay in cash or according to your monthly payment plan.

When I have completed payment as above, forward certificate to:

Name
(Sign given name in full)

Address

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How much do you know about the Science of Investment? Do you know the *Real* Earning Power of your money? What is the difference between the *Rental* Power and *Earning* Power of your money? Do you know how \$100 grows into \$2200?

Why you should get **Investing for Profit**: Only one man in a thousand knows the difference between the *rental* power and the *earning* power of his money. Few men know the underlying principles of incorporation. Not one wage earner in 10,000 knows how to invest his savings for profit, so he accepts a paltry 2% or 3% from his bank, while this same bank often earns from 10% to 30% or more on *his money*—or he does not know the science of investing and loses his all.

Russell Sage said: "There is a common fallacy that, while for legal advice we go to lawyers, and for medical advice we go to physicians, and for the construction of a great work, to engineers—financing is everybody's business. As a matter of fact, it is the *most profound and complicated of them all*."

So let me give you just a glimpse of the valuable investment information you will get in my six big issues, "The Little Schoolmaster of the Science of Investment," a guide to money-making:

The Science of Investment.
The Root and Branch of the
Investment Tree.
How to Judge a Business Enter-
prise.
Where New Capital Put Into a
Corporation Really Goes.
"Watering"—Its Significance.
Idle Money vs. Active Money.

Capital Is Looking for a Job.
The REAL Earning Power of
Your Money.
Investment Securities Are Not
Investment Opportunities.
The Actual Possibilities of Intel-
ligent Investment.
The Capitalization of Genius and
of Opportunity.

Wait till you see a good thing—but don't wait till everyone sees it. You will then be too late. Never was a time more auspicious for a public campaign of education on the logic of true investment. A revolution in the financial world is now going on—to the profit of the small investor.

You are now face to face with your opportunity—if you have the courage to enter the open gate to the road of fortune.

I believe you will find much interest in reading my six issues of **Investing for Profit**. From

cover to cover it contains the fundamental principles of investment it has taken a lifetime to gather—from my own experience and from every available authoritative original source of information.

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If you know how to invest your savings—if you know all about the proposition in which you are about to invest your hard-earned savings—you need no advice. But if you don't, if there is a single doubt or misgiving in your mind—I shall be pleased to answer any inquiries you may make, or furnish any information I can regarding the art of saving and making money through wise investment.

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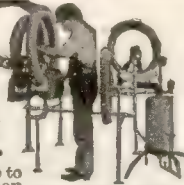


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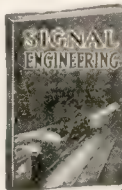
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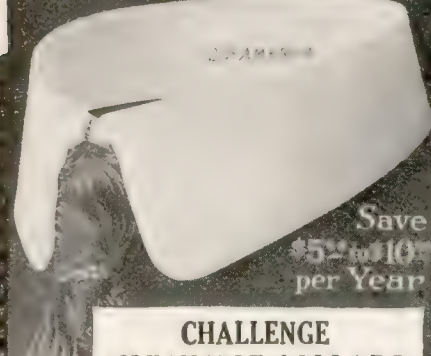
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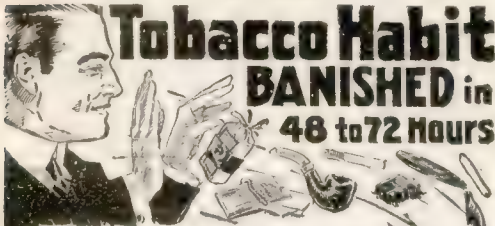
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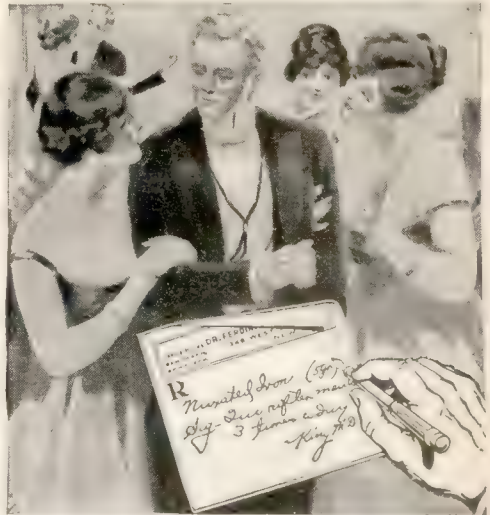
Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York physician and medical author, when interviewed on the subject, said: "There can be no vigorous iron men without iron. Pallor means anemia. Anemia means iron deficiency. The skin of anemic men and women is pale. The flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone; the brain fags and the memory fails, and often they become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

"In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, candies, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapoca, sago, farina, degerminated corn-meal, no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste pipe the water in which our vegetables are cooked, are responsible for another grave iron loss.

"Therefore, if you wish to preserve your youthful vim and vigor to a ripe old age, you must supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician, who has studied abroad in great European Medical institutions, said: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak or run-down, instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants and alcoholic beverages I am convinced that in this way they could ward off disease, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved. The real and true cause which started their disease was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by a lack of iron in the blood.

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of 20 and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health; at 46 he was care worn and nearly all in. Now at 50, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all



symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the fray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Dr. James, late of the United States Public Health Service, says: "Patients in an enervated and de-vitalized state of health—those, for instance, convalescing from protracted fevers, those suffering from a long-standing case of anemia, all such people in my opinion, need iron. Of late, there has been brought to my attention, Nuxated Iron. In practice, I have found this an ideal restorative and upbuilding agent in these cases above mentioned.

NOTE.—Nuxated iron, which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians both in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in nuxated iron that they offer to forfeit \$100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 100 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.



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Send no money with your order. I want you to see the watch before you pay one cent. See it first is my way of selling watches because my line of watches are the best made and I am proud of the fact that I can send out watches on approval and make sales by this method.

30 DAYS FREE TRIAL

After receiving and accepting any one of my watches, I want you to wear and test it for 30 days. If you are not delighted, pleased and satisfied at the end of 30 days, send it back at my expense.

MY PAYMENTS ARE SMALLER

Our capital and buying power are such that I can offer you terms that local jewelers could not meet with their limited capital.

WRITE FOR BIG CATALOG

Use the Free Coupon and write for my big catalog today. It's full of all the best watches, finest diamonds and exquisite jewelry.

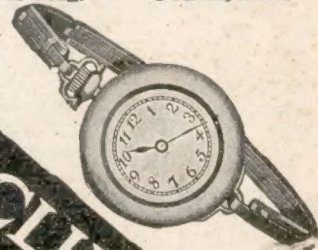
SQUARE DEAL MILLER, Pres.

Miller-Hoefler Co.
847 Miller Bldg. Detroit, Mich.

If
you
buy an
imitation
diamond the
only person you
Fool is Yourself.



We invite
Women as well
as Men to open
up a Charge
Account and Pay
Monthly.
Our Terms are the
same for Diamonds
as for Watches or
any other piece
of Jewelry



FREE CATALOG COUPON

Square Deal Miller, Pres.
847 Miller Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

Dear Mr. Miller—

Please send me your large free catalog of Watches,
Diamonds, etc., and explain your easy terms.

Name _____

Address _____



A Personal Word from Square Deal Miller

Because every account on my books represents a real friendship established on the basis of a "Square Deal" I have become known to my customers from coast to coast as Square Deal Miller. I have taught the public the real meaning of "dignified credit," and I have won confidence of over a million customers by selling only the highest grades of diamonds, watches and jewelry on a Square Deal basis from start to finish.



The Blade of Blades

Sealed

*The
Sign of
"The
Best Safety"*

7
for
35¢

It is the steel in the **Gem Damaskeene Blade**, and the treatment of it, that keeps the edge *right*—and this keen edged Blade, with the properly set Gem frame, makes the **GEM** outfit the greatest shaving combination in the world today.



Gem Blades are sold only in sealed wax-paper-wrapped packages—moisture and dust-proof—each blade in a separate envelope and each blade edge protected. **Seven blades to the set, 35c.**

The **GEM** means speed—ease—comfort—economy. Don't miss it!! Outfit includes razor complete, with seven **Gem Damaskeene Blades**, shaving and stropping handle, in handsome, durable case **\$1.00**

Dealers Everywhere

Gem Cutlery Co., Inc., New York

Canadian Branch: 591 St. Catherine St., W. Montreal



COLGATE'S

"HANDY GRIP"

The *NEW* SHAVING STICK



FACTS

-about other
shaving soaps

—creams for instance. Soap and Glycerine are the two essentials in shaving cream—the first to make a lather, the second to take up and hold water to keep the lather moist. Both Soap and Glycerine sink in water—and a shaving cream which floats is "fluffed up" with air.

Try the Sinking Test

Fill your wash basin or a glass with water. Drop into it half an inch of Shaving Cream.

Does it sink or float?

Is it all shaving value or partly air?

Colgate's Shaving Cream will sink at once.

PROOF-POSITIVE of its concentrated Glycerine and Soap content; proof also that with Colgate's you get the most luxurious and economical shave possible from a shaving cream.

Colgate's "Handy Grip" combines economy, convenience, speed and comfort better than any other shaving preparation.

We couldn't improve the soap—so in each detail of economy and convenience we improved the box to make it worthy of its contents.

Economy—No Waste

—for the last of the soap *unscrews* from the grip¹ and can be stuck to the top of the next stick.² This gives a fifth to a sixth more usable soap than in other containers. An economy—and a *new* feature.



1
Unscrew the stub



2
Stick it on the new stick



3
The box locks



4
Refills

Greater Security

—no coming apart in your traveling case—one turn of the screw-thread locks the box. This, too, is *new*.³

Less Cost

—for the "HandyGrip" box can be refilled⁴ with "filler sticks" at a lower price. This also is *new*.

COLGATE & CO., New York